

# ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

## 2024 Annual Report



***Oregon Public Utility Commission***

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# Contents

I.	About the PUC.....	5
	Mission, Vision, and Values.....	5
	Mission .....	5
	Vision .....	5
	Values .....	5
	Agency Leadership & Key Staff.....	6
	Commissioners .....	6
	Agency Leadership .....	6
	Environmental Justice Personnel .....	6
	Organizational Chart .....	7
	PUC Budget & Revenue Sources .....	7
	PUC Programs.....	8
II.	Environmental Justice Highlights .....	12
	Key 2023 Environmental Justice Projects .....	12
	Design and Oversight of Customer Facing Energy Programs .....	12
	Utility Planning and Investment Strategies.....	13
	Energy Affordability .....	14
	Procedural Justice .....	15
III.	PUC Environmental Justice Considerations .....	16
IV.	Address Environmental Justice Issues (ORS 182.550 Section 1) .....	17
	Environmental Justice Consideration Process .....	17
	Process for Incorporating Environmental Justice .....	17
	Tracking Environmental Justice Issues .....	18
	Environmental Justice Community Considerations .....	18
	Defining Environmental Justice.....	18
	Identifying and Prioritizing Environmental Justice Communities .....	20
V.	Public Participation & Meaningful Involvement (ORS 182.535 Section 2) .....	21
	Public Engagement Policy & Processes .....	21
VI.	PUC Environmental Justice Impacts (ORS 182.550 Section 3) .....	24
	Measures of Environmental Justice Impact from PUC Decisions .....	24
VII.	Environmental Justice Progress (ORS 182.550 Section 4).....	25

Strategic Planning.....	25
Interagency and Community Coordination.....	28
Policy Implementation .....	29
Support for Environmental Justice Policies.....	31
VIII. Environmental Justice Mapping Tool Involvement (ORS 182.550 Section 5) .....	31
IX. Environmental Justice Mapping Council Engagement 2024.....	32
X. Environmental Justice Council Legislation Citations .....	32
XI. Meaningful Engagement Related Legislation.....	32
PUC Impacted Legislation Regarding Meaningful Engagement.....	32
Collaboration on Mandated Engagement.....	33
XII. Looking Ahead (Optional) .....	33
XIII. Definitions .....	34
XIV. Appendix .....	37

About the PUC

## Mission, Vision, and Values

### Mission

***The mission of the Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) is to ensure Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and fairly priced utility services that advance state policy and promote the public interest. We evaluate differing viewpoints and visions of the public interest to arrive at balanced, independent decisions supported by fact and law.***

The laws and rules governing PUC proceedings and the regulatory process are primarily set forth in Oregon Revised Statutes (ORS) Chapters 756, 757, and 758, and Oregon Administrative Rules (OAR) Chapter 860. The PUC's Internal Operating Guidelines inform the public about the practical operation of the PUC's decision-making process. These rules and guidelines help the PUC to:

- Ensure the safety, reliability, and quality of essential utility services.
- Scrutinize utility costs, risks, and performance to ensure just and reasonable rates.
- Manage customer and community choices to ensure value for all customers.
- Encourage the community to be engaged and better informed on utility-related issues by participating in public meetings or submitting comments on topics of interest.

The PUC is included as a natural resource agency under ORS 182.535 and for the purposes described by the Oregon Legislature's 2022 Regular Session, [House Bill 4077](#). Our regulatory functions over utilities have profound implications for the management, conservation, and impact of natural resources in Oregon, particularly in the context of energy resources, environmental policy, and justice.

### Vision

Our vision is to improve the lives of Oregonians through effective utility regulation and leadership in the utility sector. We serve Oregon by:

- holding utilities to high standards of performance and value,
- guiding a transformation in utility services consistent with Oregon's social, environmental, and economic goals, and
- adapting regulatory processes to improve inclusion, learning, collaboration, and problem-solving.

### Values

**Accountability:** Our responsibility to serve utility customers drives us to be diligent in our work, and efficient and effective in managing financial and human resources. **Integrity:** As individuals, we are honest, trustworthy, and respectful. As an organization, we use open, fair processes and independent analysis to reach informed and just decisions. **Inclusion:** We strive to advance equitable access, engage diverse perspectives, promote collaboration, and recognize our impact on all communities. **Adaptability:** We develop expertise and adapt our skills, our organization, and our regulatory processes and tools in order to meet rapid change in our regulated industries.

## Agency Leadership & Key Staff

### Commissioners



Megan Decker, Chair



Les Perkins, Commissioner



Letha Tawney, Commissioner

### Agency Leadership

Nolan Moser ♦ Executive Director

Robin Freeman ♦ Policy Director

Alison Lackey ♦ Chief Administrative Law Judge

Mandy Standiford ♦ Chief Operating Officer

Bryan Conway ♦ Director – Water, Telecom, Safety, and Consumers Program

Caroline Moore ♦ Director – Energy Program

JP Batmale ♦ Administrator – Energy Resources and Planning Division

Scott Gibbens ♦ Administrator – Energy Rates and Regulatory Strategy

### Environmental Justice Personnel

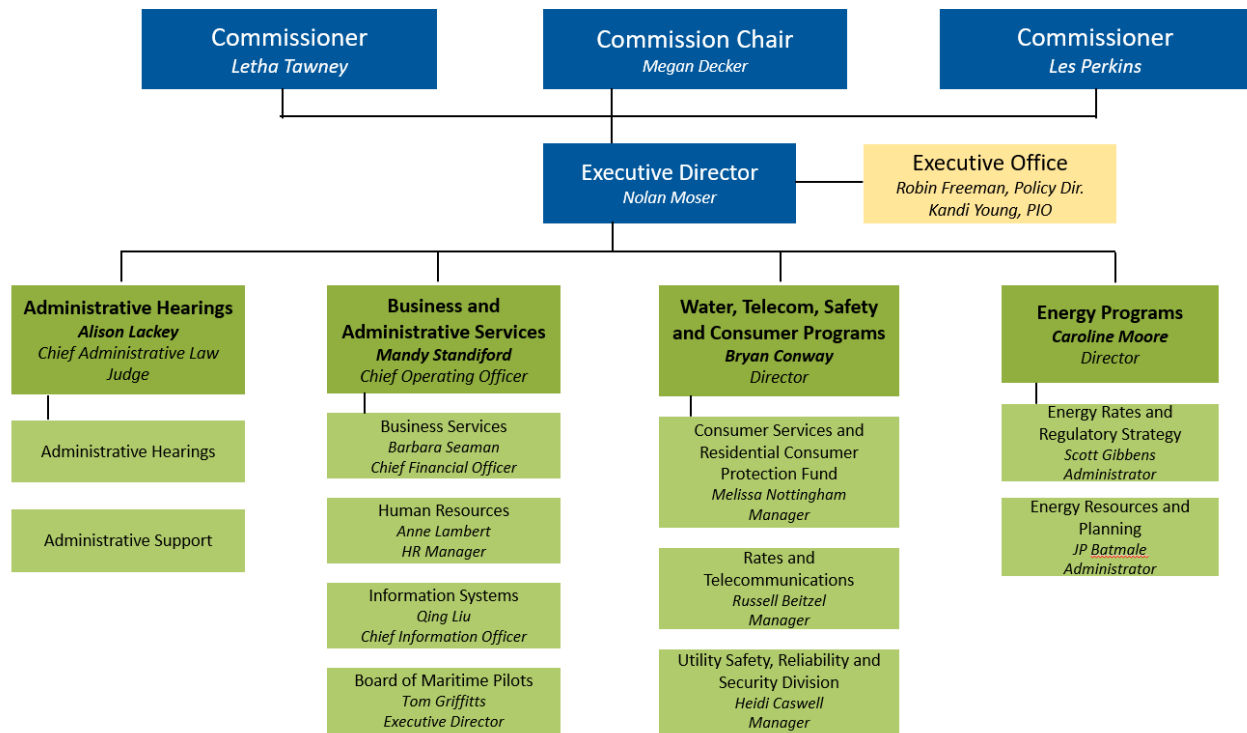
Ezell Watson III ♦ Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program Director

Michelle Scala ♦ Energy Justice Program Manager

Kate Ayres ♦ Energy Justice Analyst

Isabella Carreno ♦ U.S. DOE Clean Energy Innovator Fellow

## Organizational Chart



## PUC Budget & Revenue Sources

Description	Revenue	Expenses	Earnings
Other Funds Limited	\$55,635,769	\$65,505,686	
Other Funds Non-Limited	\$54,531,227	\$54,829,960	
Federal Funds Limited	\$1,292,424	\$1,292,424	

### Other Funds Limited

“Other Funds Limited” covers the budget for the PUC’s policy & administration divisions, a portion of the utility regulation divisions, the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) divisions, and the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots (OBMP). The OBMP is funded through pilot licensing fees and board operations fees that are charged to vessels using pilotage services. The PUC is funded primarily through a Utility Gross Operating Revenue Fee of up to 0.45 percent assessed on a utility’s annual gross operating revenue. The PUC receives funds from the RSPF surcharge. Each paying retail subscriber who has telephone, cellular, or interconnected voice over internet protocol service with access to the Oregon Telecommunications Relay Service pays three cents per month to support the Residential Service Protection Fund programs. The PUC also receives a small amount of funding through the Public Purpose Charge (PPC), which funds half a full-time position tasked with oversight responsibilities.

### Other Funds Non-Limited

The Oregon Universal Service Fund (OUSF) provides payments to eligible telecommunication carriers to maintain and upgrade their networks and keep the price of basic service reasonable in areas of the state where costs are high. All certified telecommunication carriers are assessed a 6 percent charge on their intrastate retail revenue to fund the program. Only eligible telecommunication carriers approved by the Commission receive distributions from the fund. A small amount of the funds collected pay for the administration of the program.

### Federal Funds Limited

The PUC's Gas Pipeline Safety Program receives federal funds that cover approximately 60 percent of the Commission's natural gas pipeline safety program costs. The Pipeline Safety Program Grant requires a match of Other Funds (Utility Gross Revenue Fees). Currently, the match is approximately 60 percent Federal Funds – 40 percent Other Funds – Utility Fees.

## PUC Programs

- Executive Office
- Business & Administrative Services
- Administrative Hearings
- Energy Program
- Water, Telecom, Safety, and Consumers Program

The PUC is organized into four functional areas: 1) Executive Office, 2) Utility Program, 3) Administrative Hearings Division, and 4) Business and Administrative Services.

1. The **Executive Office, led by the Executive Director**, provides leadership and direction to ensure the PUC meets its mission and strategic goals. The Executive Office oversees and coordinates the work of all agency employees, develops strategies and processes that support long-range agency and organizational planning, guides the PUC's engagement with external stakeholders and governmental officials, and manages communications about PUC proceedings and activities to external stakeholders, the media, and public, as well as to agency employees. The Executive Office coordinates engagement with the legislature and ensures legislative directives and the Governor's executive orders are implemented.

In late 2020, the PUC established a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Program Director (DEI Program Director)**. This position, with the support of and in collaboration with PUC leadership, provides vision, direction, counsel, and leadership to all employees in the areas of equity, diversity, and inclusion in their daily work, and in the programs and activities of the agency. Included in the responsibilities assigned to this role is **tribal liaison**.

The Tribal Liaison plays a critical role in fostering positive relationships between the PUC and the nine federally recognized tribes within the state with responsibilities including:

**Communication and Collaboration:**

- Serving as the primary point of contact between the PUC and tribal governments.
- Facilitating communication and collaboration on issues of mutual interest, such as utility regulation, energy resource development, and environmental protection.
- Providing information and updates to tribal governments on PUC activities and regulatory proceedings.
- Identifying and addressing concerns raised by tribal governments.

**Policy Development and Implementation:**

- Advising the PUC on potential impacts of proposed policies on tribal governments and their members.
- Recommending policy changes that promote tribal sovereignty and self-determination.
- Working with PUC staff to develop and implement policies that are consistent with tribal treaty rights and interests.
- Providing training and technical assistance to PUC staff on tribal issues.

**Advocacy and Outreach:**

- Representing the PUC at tribal government meetings and events.
- Building relationships with tribal leaders, communities, and organizations.
- Raising awareness of tribal issues and concerns among PUC staff and stakeholders.
- Advocating for policies and programs that benefit tribal communities.

2. The PUC's **Energy Program, led by the Energy Program Director**, serves as the technical and analytical arm of the agency, regulating the state's six investor-owned energy utilities. Staff analyze electric and natural-gas utility filings, help build a factual record in PUC investigations, recommend policy actions, inspect utility facilities, and fulfill other responsibilities to ensure the PUC can carry out its mission and serve Oregon's utility customers. PUC staff in this division are organized into two regulatory programs:

- ***Energy Resources and Planning Division (ERP)*** -- assists the PUC in its responsibility to ensure least cost, least risk planning by Oregon's investor-owned utilities and associated activities, such as cost-effective energy efficiency acquisition through Energy Trust of Oregon and evaluation of new technologies and their potential to serve utility customers. ERP also assists the PUC in its responsibility to ensure the utilities meet legislative mandates, and that strategic pilots and programs meet the goals of the legislature and the needs of ratepayers. This division conducts rulemaking processes with stakeholders to implement new state policies such as Community Solar, transportation electrification, and renewable natural gas.
- ***Energy Rates and Regulatory Strategy Division*** – leads the review utility rate adjustments and helps align the Utility Program's overall efforts with the PUC's strategic vision and serves as a

shared technical and policy resource on key, cross-cutting issues that are challenging electric utilities and regulators. The Rates and Strategy Division helps manage holistic affordability for energy utility customers and track and adapt regulatory action in response to significant industry transformation caused by impacts of technology innovation, changes in market structures, shifts in government jurisdiction, development of new products and services, and new environmental and social justice directives. The team also takes a primary lead on implementing new legislative directives.

3. The PUC's **Water, Telecom, Safety, and Consumers Program** ensures safety and reliability across regulated services while providing technical recommendations, ensuring efficiency and directly supporting customers through monitoring services and reducing barriers for Oregonians. PUC staff in this division are organized into three programs:
  - **Consumer Services** — directly supports consumers with two key teams, Consumer Services, and the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF). Consumer Services addresses customer inquiries and investigates complaints against both regulated and unregulated companies to ensure compliance with administrative rules and company tariffs and plays a critical role in monitoring services to ensure they are equitable and effectively serve all consumers. The RSPF administers four programs designed to reduce barriers for income-eligible Oregonians by providing discounts for telephone and internet services and providing communication equipment and support for consumers with disabilities ensure these essential services are accessible to all who need them.
  - **Rates and Telecommunications**—helps promote safe and reliable regulated services while providing informed recommendations on a variety of technical issues for both water and telecommunication companies. Additionally, recommends which companies are funded and for how much from the \$30 million dollar per year Oregon Universal Service Fund.
  - **Utility Safety, Reliability and Security Division** -- establishes and enforces regulations and promotes practices to ensure the state's electric, natural gas and telecommunications assets (often located within public rights-of-way, either underground or overhead) are constructed, operated, and maintained in a safe and efficient manner. This division evaluates emerging utility and safety infrastructure issues such as wildfire, seismic and cyber security, provides technical assistance to policy development on energy and its evolving technologies, investigates serious gas pipeline safety incidents and supports energy and telecommunications operators during emergency events.
4. The **Administrative Hearings Division (AHD)**, led by the Chief Administrative Law Judge, is an independent division in the agency that conducts legal proceedings brought under the Commission's jurisdiction. PUC proceedings include rulemaking and contested case hearings on issues concerning utility rates, terms, and services. Hearings involve mergers and acquisitions, rate proposals and consumer complaints, and ratemaking proceedings for the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots. AHD also

oversees records management, public records requests, and agency compliance with the Administrative Procedures Act.

5. The **Business and Administrative Services, led by the Chief Operating Officer, includes** the following program areas:
  - ***Business Services*** -- provides budget planning and development; compiles and publishes the agency's biennium budget; and assists in maintaining and updating the agency's policies and procedures. The section also provides essential business functions ranging from fiscal and accounting services and revenue fee collection, to contracting, procurement, and payroll coordination.
  - ***Information Services*** -- provides all technology support services for the PUC. These services include network and electronic mail administration, database management systems, hardware support and maintenance, and software and application development.
  - ***Human Resources*** -- directs, plans, and administers comprehensive human resource and organizational development programs and functions to achieve the agency's goals and objectives. These functions include supervising the agency's Human Resources department and staff, and providing daily direction related to human resource administration to management and staff.

The PUC also has responsibility for the budget and administrative oversight of the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots (OBMP). The OBMP protects public health, safety, and welfare by ensuring that only highly qualified and carefully trained persons are licensed to pilot vessels entering or leaving Oregon's ports and waterways. The Board consists of three public members, three pilot members, and three shipping industry members; each appointed by the Governor and approved by the Senate.

We strive to advance equitable access, engage diverse perspectives, promote collaboration, and recognize our impact on all communities.

# I. Environmental Justice Highlights

## Key 2024 Environmental Justice Projects

The PUC strives to make continual progress in the advancement of environmental justice through our implementation of state policy and execution of our agency's mission. We do so by working to address the disproportionate impacts that the energy system places on environmental justice communities, promoting equitable access to the benefits of utility investments and programs, and advancing the influence of community input in PUC and utility company decisions. Key initiatives to integrate environmental justice into the core work of the PUC are described below.

### Design and Oversight of Customer-Facing Energy Programs

The PUC is committed to promoting access to clean energy programs for environmental justice communities. Highlights of this work include:

- **Energy Trust of Oregon<sup>1</sup>:** In our oversight of the Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust), the PUC continues to work collaboratively to target Energy Trust's programs for energy efficiency and renewable energy for customers based on income. To facilitate success in this effort, we expanded equity-focused metrics within the Energy Trust of Oregon's performance measures.<sup>2</sup> In 2024, the PUC modernized its contractual agreement with Energy Trust, and in doing so established mitigation of energy burden as a basis to waive cost-effectiveness tests along with other considerations. Targeting energy efficiency to those experiencing the greatest energy burdens is one of the best mechanisms to drive benefits related to health, comfort, housing, financial stability, and the climate.
- **Transportation Electrification:** Following the implementation of HB 2165 (2021), the PUC plays an active role in directing significant new investment to advance access to electric transportation in environmental justice communities. The PUC has issued guidance and established rules to ensure that plans for transportation electrification are designed with direct consultation from these communities, that expenditures are reported and monitored for equity and effectiveness, and that ratepayer impacts are considered.
- **Community Solar:** The Community Solar Program, established by the legislature in 2016, continues to break down barriers to solar energy access. At least 10 percent of community solar projects must be made available to income qualifying customers. To ensure that this aspect of the program is executed in a beneficial manner, the PUC has hired a dedicated Low-income Program Facilitator.<sup>3</sup> The program is operational with 46.3 MW of available 161 MW AC online. Project Managers have enrolled nearly 4,000 subscribers from Oregon ratepayers and over 700 low-income residential household subscribers as well as nearly 1,100 household units through low-income multifamily housing providers. As of

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<sup>1</sup> Learn more about the Energy Trust of Oregon here: <https://www.energytrust.org/about/who-we-are/>.

<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of equity metrics in Energy Trust of Oregon's performance measures was an important element of HB 3141 in 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Learn more about the Community Solar Program's administration here: <https://www.oregoncsp.org/about/>

October 18, 2024, there were 79.4 MW of pre-certified projects across Portland General Electric (PGE) and PacifiCorp service territories.

## Utility Planning and Investment Strategies

In the area of utility planning oversight, the PUC has worked diligently to encourage utility investment plans to consider negative impacts on environmental justice communities and drive the benefits of investment to communities. Highlights of this work include:

- **Clean Energy Plans:** In 2024, the PUC issued orders on the first ever Clean Energy Plans from PacifiCorp and PGE. In both instances, the PUC directed each utility to better establish more meaningful targets for investing in community-based clean energy resources and using Community Benefits Indicators (CBIs) to measure the environmental justice impacts of future activities in their next round of Clean Energy Plan submissions. These Commission orders also directed the utilities to more meaningfully engage with their stakeholders vis-à-vis the Community Benefits and Indicator Advisory Groups, established per HB 2021, in development of these improved targets.
- **Distribution System Planning:** The PUC requires utility companies to consider the equitable distribution of impacts and benefits when developing their 3-year plans for investments in maintenance and modernization of the electric grid. The electric utilities have made advancements in their analysis of impacts and methods for collecting community feedback.
- **Community Benefits Biennial Report:** Per HB 2021, every two years PacifiCorp and PGE must submit a report summarizing the activities of their Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Groups (CBIAG) and the Community Benefits Indicators the CBIAG's help to develop in order to influence these utilities' planning and future procurement.
- **Modernization of Integrated Resource Planning and Acquisition:** The PUC launched a process to improve utility resource planning and acquisition processes to better position Oregon to meet our ambitious decarbonization goals, which includes prioritization around improvements to community engagement. These priorities include such things as: 1) more impactful engagement around utility plans; 2) more visibility into affordability implications, community impacts, reliability risks, and economic risks associated with near term plans; 3) the promotion of flexibility, transparency and efficient scrutiny as utility implement their plans; and 4) improved visibility into policy compliance strategies and policy-related risks.
- **Environmental Justice Standard Data Requests:** Following two public workshops in July 2024 and several rounds of public comments the Commission established Environmental Justice Standard Data Requests (SDRs) for dockets involving Certificates of Public Convenience and Necessity (CPCN). These SDRs are designed to ensure that utilities seeking condemnation authority to build transmission lines have adequately considered community impacts and secured community input. Responses to the SDRs must be submitted with any future applications for CPCNs and can be found on the PUC's [website](#). In 2025, the PUC plans to develop additional EJ SDRs specific for utility general rate cases that will offer insight into the effects of proposed rate increases on environmental justice communities.
- **Wildfire Mitigation Plans:** After receiving numerous filings regarding the impacts of utilities wildfire plans, the PUC reshaped the subsequent phase of the wildfire mitigation plan investigation to create space for discussions regarding outreach methods and their effectiveness undertaken through the plan

development and deployment. Additionally, in performing the safety-focused and emergency support functions, PUC staff have worked closely with other agency partners to focus on:

- Support for community-significant locations, such as warming shelters, but also for medically vulnerable accounts.
- Communicating about community impacts with other agency support functions when their channels can bolster what is happening in impacted communities.
- Established a heads-up function with larger operators that might trigger the need for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit replacements to enable the Oregon Health Authority to rapidly restore the recipients' access to food.
- Worked with Consumer Services to create a process where the customers can register concerns regarding infrastructure maintenance for the PUC to investigate and encourage the operating company to address.

## Energy Affordability

The Energy Affordability Act of 2021 ([HB 2475](#)) provides the PUC new authority to consider “differential energy burdens on low-income customers and other economic, social equity or environmental justice factors that affect affordability for certain classes of utility customers” when establishing the rates that customers of regulated utilities pay. In addition to targeting programs as described above, the PUC has undertaken activities to implement HB 2475 through utility rate-setting, including:

- **Interim Bill Discounts:** Beginning in 2022, the PUC has been working through a public process ([Docket No. UM 2211](#)) to establish interim bill discount programs for income qualifying customers. This effort was designed to get relief to energy burdened customers quickly and leave space for a more involved process to utilize the PUC's new authority. As of January 2024, the PUC had approved interim income-based bill discounts, for five of the six regulated electric and natural gas utilities; in fall 2024, the remaining utility, Idaho Power, began implementing low-income relief according to a stipulation with staff and environmental justice advocates in their general rate case. In 2023, the PUC worked with utilities and stakeholders to track key programmatic data and identify ongoing refinements, such as increasing the level of discount provided to the most energy burdened customers.
- **Low-Income Needs Assessments or Energy Burden Assessments:** The PUC is committed to ensuring that utility companies empirically understand the unique burdens that their customers face and use that information to identify the highest value actions that can be taken to address them. With input from stakeholders and the PUC, utility companies have brought in expert consultants to perform deep analyses called, Low Income Needs Assessment and make the findings available publicly. As of the end of 2024, all electric and natural gas companies have completed an assessment, with several working on second assessments.
- **Phase Two of HB 2475 Implementation:** Beginning in 2024, the PUC began Phase 2 of the HB 2475 Implementation, focused on:
  - **Energy Efficiency and Weatherization:** In 2024, the PUC focused on identifying near-term opportunities to overcome barriers to access for weatherization, energy efficiency, and current utility bill discount programs. PUC staff developed an overview of existing programs and outlined a list of short-term actions to improve weatherization and energy efficiency services for low-income households.

- **Energy Burden Metric Report (EBMR):** The PUC is focused on ensuring the right data is available to understand the burdens that our energy utility customers face and to use that information to better understand the highest value actions and program refinements that can address them. With input from stakeholders and the utility companies, the PUC has begun a rulemaking process to streamline data reporting. This process will result in a report on energy burden metrics that encompasses major data points impacting energy burdened households and data that is standardized and comparable across utilities.
- **Bill Discount Program Improvements:** PUC staff focused on discussing improvements to utility bill discount programs in filed general rate cases in 2024, with the Commission ordering changes in two utility programs. PUC staff began initiating discussions towards broader conversations around rates for Phase 3 of HB 2475 Implementation in 2025.
- **Disconnection and Arrearage Management:** Staff adjusted the original phase in August 2024 following concerns with the level of arrearages and disconnections observed in 2024. The revised workstream allowed staff to focus its efforts on interim protections that would mitigate customer harms associated with arrearages and disconnections prior to the 2024-2025 heating season. The PUC passed temporary emergency rules that provided protections for low-income and medical certificate customers this winter heating season and plans to further investigate additional protections in a permanent rulemaking process in 2025.

## Procedural Justice

The PUC is committed to improving the ability of those impacted by PUC and utility decisions to participate in the decision-making process. This includes increasing accessibility of input processes and holding decision makers accountable for incorporating the input received. Major procedural justice efforts include:

- **Intervenor Funding:** HB 2475 allows organizations that represent low-income residential customers and residential customers that are members of environmental justice communities to receive funding to participate in PUC proceedings. This allows funding for such groups up to \$500,000 annually. The PUC developed processes and administrative rules for access to this funding with significant engagement and input from impacted groups. The PUC also held several informational and training sessions to help prepare communities and organizations to weigh in on the process and influence outcomes. Stakeholders have been utilizing these funds to participate in a range of major PUC decision-making processes and the impacts of their contributions are meaningful. In 2025, the PUC is beginning a process with stakeholders and utilities to renegotiate the funding agreement moving forward.
- **Utility Advisory Groups:** HB 2021 requires large electric companies to establish Community Impacts and Benefits Advisory Groups comprised of “representatives of environmental justice communities and low-income ratepayers” and other affected entities within the electric company’s service territory.<sup>4</sup> Participation in the advisory groups is funded. In 2023, membership was finalized, and initial scoping was completed such that the groups were active and providing meaningful input into a range

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<sup>4</sup> See ORS 469A.425 here: [https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills\\_laws/ors/ors469a.html](https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/bills_laws/ors/ors469a.html).

of planning, program, and rate-setting issues.<sup>5, 6</sup> In 2025, Staff will review the first biennial reports from each group. While not required by statute, the other regulated utilities have voluntarily consulted similar groups in 2023.

- **Process Improvements:** The PUC has also taken strides to increase accessibility features relative to our public processes. This includes enhancing language accessibility options in public meetings and providing translation services for several of our published documents. Lastly, we continue to offer opportunities for evening public meetings for proceedings that have significant impacts to communities and actively engage advocate and community based groups to participate and provide input on key topics before the Commission.
- **Procedural Equity in General Rate Cases:** In 2024, the PUC began a process of addressing procedural equity considerations in utility-filed general rate cases. PUC staff hosted three procedural equity workshops that brought together stakeholders, PUC staff, and the utilities to discuss environmental and energy justice issues stemming from the utility-filed rate cases. In 2025, PUC staff are planning a procedural equity investigation, informed by stakeholders, that will look into the barriers currently present and the priorities and opportunities available to inform and address issues.

## II. PUC Environmental Justice Considerations

We regulate investor-owned utilities in Oregon, including electric, natural gas, telephone service providers (landline only), and select water companies. Our core mission is to ensure all Oregonians have access to safe, reliable, and reasonably priced utility services that advance state policy and promote public interest through an environmental justice lens. We understand that achieving this mission requires addressing the disproportionate environmental and health burdens on under-served communities, including communities of color, rural areas, tribal nations, and low-income households.

Our regulatory actions are informed by the need to mitigate the impacts on all utility customers, with a focused commitment to those historically marginalized. This involves understanding the systemic inequities that have led to unequal access to utility services and representation in decision-making processes. We aim to create a more inclusive, transparent, and equitable regulatory environment that reflects the diverse needs and voices of all communities.

We recognize the significance of our decisions in shaping the rates, quality, and availability of essential services. These decisions disproportionately impact marginalized communities who often face higher energy burdens, lack of access to energy-efficient housing, and fewer resources to advocate for their needs. Hence, our commitment extends to dismantling barriers and promoting participation in our regulatory processes,

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<sup>5</sup> Learn more about PGE's advisory group here: <https://portlandgeneral.com/about/who-we-are/community/community-benefits-and-impacts-advisory-group>.

<sup>6</sup> Learn more about Pacific Power's advisory group here: <https://www.pacificorp.com/energy/oregon-community-benefits-and-impacts.html>.

ensuring that decisions are made with an understanding of their implications for environmental justice communities.

We are committed to continual progress in integrating environmental justice into our regulatory framework. We understand the importance of equitable utility access, the need for diverse representation in decision-making, and the importance to mitigate environmental and social disparities. Our efforts are geared toward creating a more sustainable, fair, and resilient utility sector that serves the needs of all Oregonians, now and into the future.

### III. Address Environmental Justice Issues (ORS 182.550 Section 1)

#### Environmental Justice Consideration Process

##### Process for Incorporating Environmental Justice

The PUC has taken significant steps to advance environmental justice into our operations and decisions. This has included strides to evolve our agency culture to include a greater focus on the tenets and values of diversity, equity, and inclusion in how we interact with our internal and external stakeholders. Our DEI program director brings these concepts into our business operations and evaluating opportunities for learning and growth throughout the agency. Further, the Energy Justice Program Manager leads the development and implementation of an equity lens in the context of our utility division and analysis of regulated energy systems.

Our DEI Strategic Plan and the inset proposed equity lens framework offer essential considerations and questions that elevate environmental justice in our work. Where the PUC has yet to develop a standardized environmental justice consideration process, we still actively and intentionally center community in our regulatory work and decisions. We engage with advocates, community-based organizations, and the public to ensure diverse voices are represented in our processes. Further, our public meetings open and close with opportunities for public comment and we provide recurring training opportunities for groups and individuals interest in engaging in our processes.

In 2023 the PUC established an internal cross-divisional focus group that meets regularly to discuss significant issues in general rate case proceedings, including those that impact environmental justice. Due to the comprehensive nature of these cases, significant proposals are often made in this process, such as how rates are charged and costs recovered from customers. The fiscal inequities faced by many environmental justice communities elevate the importance of strategic thought and tracking of these issues. This group's goal is to collaborate internally on economic and public policy in the interest of advancing our agency's mission and equity goals.

In 2024, the PUC saw four utilities file general rate cases following a year that saw some of the largest rate increases for many Oregon customers in recent memory. PUC staff's integration of environmental justice concepts into the analysis of rate case proposals was more prevalent than previous rate case processes. This

came in the form of stronger analysis and evidence where utility ratemaking proposals disproportionately affect marginalized communities, proposals from PUC staff and stakeholders that limit the utilities' abilities to pass through costs outside of a general rate case, increased bill discount program assistance, stronger disconnection protections in the winter, and continue to phase out residential line extensions. The Commission has shown in the four rate cases this year that environmental justice considerations are relevant to overall decisions in the final rate case orders.

Externally, we use our regulatory authority to advance robust community engagement and environmental justice considerations by the investor-owned utilities (IOUs). This is demonstrated across distributed system planning, integrated resource plans, clean energy plans, and other utility planning efforts impacting the community. Throughout these proceedings, the PUC creates space to recognize, analyze, and address disparities experienced by environmental justice communities, and typically results in the Commission establishing a requirement or condition for the utility to mitigate identified harms. Further, Oregon's Clean Energy Legislation included a requirement for the IOUs to establish Utility Customer Benefits and Impacts Advisory Groups, with oversight provided by the PUC. These groups advance environmental justice in electric IOU planning by advancing community perspectives in utility decision-making, all of which is expected to be tracked and documented in a biennial report to the PUC.

## Tracking Environmental Justice Issues

Similar to the PUC's current status of incorporating environmental justice considerations into our agency and work, tracking environmental justice issues is also an area that has not been formalized. However, we have conducted a series of environmental justice internal mapping exercises and coordination across the utility division and this document is maintained by the agency's Energy Justice Program Manager. This document allows us to review PUC work that has some level of environmental justice within the scope or outcomes. We monitor the docket, level of environmental justice implications and type, and share any relevant findings in our analysis that might inform other workstreams or areas where environmental justice is of issue.

Oregon's 2021 Clean Energy Legislation also represents a means of tracking environmental justice issues for the PUC. One of the key components of this legislation is the requirement of a biennial report to be completed by the Utility's Customer Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group. The report is filed with the PUC and is intended to assess the community benefits and impacts of the electric company's actions. It includes information on energy burden, disconnections, opportunities for diverse contracting, and actions taken within environmental justice communities to enhance resilience and distribution system investments. The report also covers the distribution of infrastructure investments in these communities, the social, economic, and environmental co-benefits of the Company's investment's customer experiences, and engagement initiatives.

## Environmental Justice Community Considerations

### Defining Environmental Justice

The PUC defines environmental justice communities as described in HB 4077; which is to include communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited

infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth, and persons with disabilities.

Our practice is to consider inclusivity in the determination of environmental justice communities where not explicitly referenced in statute. We expect to allow this definition to evolve based on the work of the environmental justice communities and based on the needs for advancing environmental justice within our capacity as an investor-owned utility regulator.

Other relevant statute and definitions that govern our definition of community relative to environmental justice include Section 2 of HB 2165 which defines “underserved communities” as residents of rental or multifamily housing, communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, tribal communities, rural communities, frontier communities, coastal communities, and other communities adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards. We further clarified these communities for the purposes of Transportation Electrification Program implementation and performance metrics with the help of stakeholder feedback and community engagement. Specifically:

- **Residents of rental housing** are people, including individuals renting a room, entitled under a rental agreement to occupy a dwelling unit to the exclusion of others, including a dwelling unit owned, operated, or controlled by a public housing authority.
- **Residents of multifamily housing** are people that reside in a structure or facility established primarily to provide housing that provides more than one living unit and may also provide facilities that are functionally related and subordinate to the living units for use by the occupants in social, health, educational, or recreational activities. Multifamily housing includes special care facilities, which are defined by ORS 443.400-445 as, “for the elderly, including but not limited to individual living units within such structures, mobile home and manufactured dwelling parks and residential facilities licensed under ORS 443.400...and other congregate care facilities with or without domiciliary care. For persons with disabilities, including, but not limited to, individual living units within such structures, mobile home and manufactured dwelling parks and residential facilities licensed under ORS 443.400...other congregate care facilities with or without domiciliary care. This does not include nursing homes, hospitals, places primarily engaged in recreational activities, and single-family, detached dwellings, except manufactured dwellings situated in a mobile home and manufactured dwelling park.”
- **Communities of color** are communities of people who are not identified as White, emphasizing common experiences of racism.
- **Communities experiencing lower incomes** are residential customers whose household income is less than or equal to 120 percent of state median income adjusted for household size.
- **Tribal communities** are Oregon’s nine recognized Native American tribes: Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Coquille Tribe, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, The Klamath

Tribes, Confederated Tribes of Siletz, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Indian Reservation. Or a utility can recognize a credible claim of indigenous descentance by another group.

- **Rural communities** are people residing 30 or more miles by road from an urban community of 50,000 people or more.
- **Frontier communities** are people residing 75 miles by road from a community of less than 2,000 individuals.
- **Coastal communities** are people residing west of Oregon's Coastal Mountains.
- **Communities adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards** are people residing in a part of Oregon that is adversely affected by criteria pollutants, or climate change.

Staff's guidance on how utilities can define underserved communities geographically will serve in the interim before the Oregon Environmental Justice Council completes a common state mapping tool.

## Identifying and Prioritizing Environmental Justice Communities

- **State Agency Partners.** The PUC does not currently have an agency-maintained environmental justice mapping tool. However, we regularly engage with our state agency partners, including the Office of Housing and Community Services and the Department of Energy to coordinate on relevant data collection and environmental justice community identification. The PUC is also actively engaged with the Environmental Justice Council Mapping Tool Working Group and will continue that engagement in 2025 as work towards a completed mapping tool continues.
- **National Tools.** PUC staff also utilizes publicly available national mapping and data tools including but not limited to, EJSCREEN, the Environmental Protection Agency's Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping tool; the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), a geospatial mapping tool that identifies areas across the U.S. where communities face significant environmental, health, and socioeconomic burdens; the Low-Income Energy Affordability Data (LEAD) tool, an interactive online platform to assist in understanding the housing and energy characteristics of low- and moderate-income households; and U.S. Census Bureau data like the American Community Survey, which provides demographic, social, economic, and housing statistics.
- **Utility Data.** Often, the PUC can review investor-owned utility data at various levels of granularity to help inform our environmental justice work relative to identifying and prioritizing these communities. Several utilities have launched mapping tools to assess community vulnerabilities in the context of their distribution systems; grid reliability; wildfire risk; system resilience and more. We are also able to review customer level data that can be analyzed in conjunction with other data tools to interpret relevant trends and system disparities environmental justice communities may face.

Some of the ways the PUC works to prioritize EJ communities are by advancing:

- **Procedural equity** through inclusive and accessible engagement of affected communities.
- **Structural equity** through engaging with impacted communities, prioritizing equity in decision making, reevaluating rate structures, allocating funding for environmental justice organizations, and supporting a just clean energy transition in underserved communities.
- **Distributional equity** through strategic deployment of programs and services that target underserved communities for early adoption and address disparities associated with legacy systems.
- **Transgenerational equity** through the consideration of downstream effects in decision making and utility investments.

## IV. Public Participation & Meaningful Involvement (ORS 182.535 Section 2)

ORS 182.550 Section 2: Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions.

### Public Engagement Policy & Processes

Building on initiatives from the SB 978 public process, the PUC allocated additional resources and efforts to engage traditionally under-represented stakeholders in PUC decision making. These stakeholders include environmental justice, social justice, and low-income communities. These efforts recognize the need to not only take action to protect these communities, but to ensure that these communities are engaged in and benefit from agency actions and activities. These efforts also address the roles of the regulated utilities and the PUC in advancing broader societal interests in climate change mitigation, social equity, and inclusion of under-represented communities.

We have enhanced stakeholder engagement and training activities to help stakeholders better understand PUC processes and to encourage participation. Some examples of these community outreach and stakeholder training efforts are summarized below.

### Recorded Training Sessions – Available Online

- [Support for those new to Commission processes, such as contested cases when not represented by counsel](#) (Sept. 2023 session)
- [Decision Making Process, Issues Addressed by the PUC, Current/Upcoming Dockets](#) (May 31, 2023, session)
- [Climate Change and Utility Investment](#)

- [Wildfire and Public Safety -- Focus on Wildfire-Related Issues and Dockets](#)
- [Low Income Ratemaking and Access to Services](#)
  - [Roles and Responsibilities of the PUC](#) - PowerPoint Slides
  - [Low-Income Issues at the PUC](#) - PowerPoint Slides
  - [Intervenor Funding: Access to funding and next steps for rules](#) -- PowerPoint Slides
- [Remote Hearings - Best practices and expectations](#)
- [Public Meetings -- What to expect and how to comment](#)
- [Rulemaking - What to expect, phases, how to comment](#)

The PUC will continue to offer training sessions based on what it gathers will be most useful internally, and from coordination with stakeholders and utilities.

The PUC hosted three workshops in 2024 within utility general rate case processes to address procedural equity issues faced by environmental justice stakeholders at the PUC. Within these workshops, the PUC, utilities, intervening and non-intervening stakeholders came together to discuss rate case issues connected to environmental justice communities. In an effort to continue this work and further address the procedural equity issues present, the PUC will be conducting a procedural equity investigation in 2025 to further analyze the ways in which barriers prevent stakeholders from fully engaging in utility dockets and PUC processes. PUC staff will engage stakeholders to understand the priorities in addressing barriers and the opportunities available to alleviate the procedural barriers in place.

The PUC conducted outreach and held listening sessions with a broad group of stakeholders to inform our Impacted Communities Work Plan in response to the Governor’s Executive Order 20-04 on Greenhouse Gas Emissions. This workplan identified numerous steps to help ensure the ongoing energy transition process provides value to all customers and stakeholders.

- We organized equity focus groups to gather feedback from community members on PUC decisions, including the investigation into the impacts of COVID-19.
- We improved our training activities to help stakeholder understanding of agency processes and encourage participation. Our expanded trainings to cover procedural and substantive topics, including participation tips and discussions on climate change, utility investment, and wildfire mitigation.
- We regularly hold listening sessions and conduct outreach to involve stakeholders in PUC proceedings, including activities to implement 2021 legislation (HB 2021—Clean Energy Plans, including PUC Staff facilitation of state-wide coordination in establishing Utility Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Groups, HB 2475—new low-income relief authority, HB 3141—energy metrics for public purpose charge expenditures, and HB 2165—dedicated transportation electrification investment in under-served communities).

- In our distribution system planning (DSP) investigation, we prioritized accessible community engagement through user-friendly online resources and a workshop series that served to educate stakeholders on distributions systems and utility planning processes and included a presentation by environmental justice advocates on how to meaningfully engage with the community. Under the adopted DSP guidelines, enhanced stakeholder engagement is also required of electric utilities, including in their clean energy planning, and community energy needs assessments.

As part of our efforts to build and strengthen relationships, the PUC has also taken meaningful steps to formalize and increase our engagement with tribal communities. Our DEI Program Director serves as the agency's first dedicated Tribal Liaison and participates in Oregon's Tribal Natural Resources Working Group and the Cultural Resource Cluster.

The PUC has engaged in a variety of activities focused on strengthening connections between the PUC and Tribal communities. Recent interactions include:

- In December 2021, Commissioner Mark Thompson participated in the Oregon Tribal Broadband Summit, which was designed to help ensure that Oregon Tribes are well positioned to engage in federal broadband funding opportunities.
- In May 2022, our Tribal Liaison attended the "Regards to Rural" conference in Pendleton, Oregon, where leaders from the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation and other Tribes met to address strengthening relationships with rural Oregonians.
- In October 2022, our Tribal Liaison attended the Annual Tribal Summit, which addressed, among other things, sessions on water, climate, natural resources, and economic development.
- In November 2022, Commissioners Letha Tawney and Mark Thompson traveled to La Grande, Oregon and met with energy staff of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla to better understand their energy plan and vision.
- In April 2023, the PUC met with the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC) to learn more about the Tribes' energy vision for the Columbia River Basin. Their presentation and conversation with Commissioners focused on CRITFC's mission to ensure there is an understanding among policy makers that the fate of the salmon is intertwined with the hydropower system.
- In July 2024, the PUC attended the 2024 Tribal-State Government-to-Government Summit, themed "Navigating Futures Together: Partnership, Policy, and Progress". The summit focused on key issues such as housing affordability, economic development, and water resource management, emphasizing collaboration and respect for Tribal Sovereignty.

- The PUC’s Tribal Liaison participated in the Oregon’s State Agencies and Tribal Governments’ Natural Resources Work Group (NRWG) 2024 quarterly cluster meetings providing information and updates related to the implementation of several PUC dockets.
- The PUC’s Tribal Liaison also participated in the May 2024 cluster meeting of the Economic Development and Community Services State -Tribal Cluster (EDCS-STC) encouraging Tribal member participation in the Utility Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory groups.

We also continue to work closely with Tribal emergency management personnel engaged in activities related to the state’s Emergency Support Function (ESF) 2—Communications and ESF 12—Electricity and Natural Gas. These efforts have included coordination with the Burns Paiute Tribe, Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw Indians, Coquille Indian Tribe, Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, Klamath Tribes, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian, Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.

## V. PUC Environmental Justice Impacts (ORS 182.550 Section 3)

ORS 182.550 Section 3: Determine the effect of agencies’ decisions on environmental justice communities.

### Measures of Environmental Justice Impact from PUC Decisions

As a regulatory body, the PUC plays more of an oversight role relative to utility actions that impact the public, including environmental justice communities. We have spent the last several years working with utilities and stakeholders to develop metrics that can be used to evaluate programs and measure community impacts across regulated activities. This includes but is not limited to, integrated resource plans (IRP), income-qualified discount programs, clean energy plans, and distribution system planning. For example, the PUC has been instrumental in working with utilities and stakeholders on the development of Community Benefit Indicators in IRPs. These indicators help assess the plan’s impact through an environmental justice lens and provide layers of accountability relative to the efficacy of the actions on improving community outcomes.

Many of our proceedings create or review reporting mechanisms that the PUC has required of the utilities. These reports include data and information on disconnections, arrearages, grid reliability, and several other relevant metrics and statistics that correlate with Commission decisions and utility actions. Several of these reports have faced greater scrutiny by the PUC as we implement harm mitigation measures such as energy assistance, demand side management, or income-qualified energy assistance programs. Other sources of measurement include mapping data on distribution systems and greenhouse gas emissions within utility service territories.

In other PUC proceedings, such as general rate cases, the PUC will issue information requests and data requests over a time series to analyze the effects of decision making and utility-actions on the system and customers. Special attention has been given to discerning impacts specifically on environmental justice communities in an effort to reduce and eliminate the disparities that have been overlooked in historic ratemaking practices.

In 2024, as part of the PUC's implementation of HB 2475, PUC staff engaged utility and advocate stakeholders to develop a utility collection strategy to enable staff to monitor energy burden, evaluate rates, programs and utility activities, enhance data transparency and accessibility, and streamline and reduce duplicative reporting requirements. In December of 2024, the Commission approved Staff's recommendation to open a formal rulemaking on energy burden metric reporting to adopt permanent rules. The PUC will continue this work and will ensure utilities file their first energy burden metric report (EBMR) in 2025.

In 2025, the PUC plans to work with stakeholders to develop a set of standard data requests focused on environmental justice considerations that can be distributed to utilities upon filing a general rate case. This will ensure that the PUC and stakeholders intervening in a utility rate case are receiving information on environmental justice information such as disconnection, arrearages, and other measures listed above, at the start of the rate case review. This will not only ensure that utilities are offering up the information when a rate case is filed, but will allow PUC staff and stakeholders to spend more time digging deeper into the environmental justice considerations connected to a rate case, rather than asking similar questions to understand the baseline information

## VI. Environmental Justice Progress (ORS 182.550 Section 4)

ORS 182.550 Section 4: Improve plans to further improve environmental justice in Oregon.

### Strategic Planning

#### Development and Use of An Equity Lens

An equity lens is a tool to address disparities and promote inclusivity. The PUC has determined that an equity lens is an important part of seeking to reverse historic harms within the implementation of its mission and move towards a more equitable energy future by better incorporating the interests of environmental justice, black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC), and under-represented or marginalized communities.

The goals of an equity lens are to help ensure that the PUC's decisions, policies, and practices:

- **Mitigate Environmental Injustices:** The PUC must facilitate the reduction and prevention of environmental injustices. This involves addressing the unequal distribution of environmental risks and harms, which often burden marginalized communities more heavily. In this context, environmental

justice refers broadly to addressing inequities across the energy system. It is inclusive of issues related to energy burden and poverty, and means the equal treatment, protection from environmental and health hazards, and meaningful involvement of environmental justice communities in the development, implementation and enforcement of regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn, practice spirituality and play. *See* ORS 757.747(1).

- **Provide Equitable Access to Clean and Affordable Resources:** The PUC should promote equitable access to clean and affordable utility services, such as electricity, water, and natural gas. This includes addressing disparities in service quality, affordability, and reliability across different demographic groups and geographical areas.
- **Reduce Energy and Water Poverty:** The PUC should aim to alleviate energy and water poverty by implementing measures that assist low-income households in accessing and affording these essential services. This might involve targeted assistance programs, rate structures that consider income levels, and energy/water efficiency initiatives.
- **Promote Clean Energy and Sustainability:** The PUC should support the transition to clean energy sources, energy efficiency, and sustainable practices. This can help reduce pollution and associated health risks in communities disproportionately affected by fossil fuel-based generation and contribute to a just and sustainable energy future.
- **Advance Environmental Justice Principles:** Regulatory policies should reflect the integration of environmental justice principles into PUC decision-making processes. This includes conducting thorough environmental impact assessments, considering cumulative impacts, and explicitly addressing the concerns of frontline communities.
- **Provide Meaningful Community Engagement:** Regulatory practices should ensure that marginalized communities have a voice in shaping policies, setting rates, and determining infrastructure investments to address their specific needs and concerns.

An equity lens poses targeted inquiries to PUC decision makers and staff that are designed to help ensure that our collective actions: (1) represent, to the extent possible, a holistic, well-informed response to the breadth of issues that customers, utilities, and stakeholders face, (2) are tailored to be as effective as possible at mitigating inequities that exist for customers with respect to access to utility services and programs, and (3) serve to further our commitment to be more inclusive of the views and challenges of those that have an interest in our actions but may have been historically under-represented. This is something the PUC is now applying and pursuing in dockets with customer impacts, for example, PUC staff applied this lens when reviewing and writing testimony in the general rate cases filed in 2024.

As an example, our equity lens may ask questions such as the following:

- What groups (by demographic or other characteristic, including race, income levels, or other social factors) are most likely to be impacted by or interested in this proposal or decision?

- What tailored outreach has been done to gain insights and views from these groups? What learnings were specifically had from that outreach?
- What inequities or other challenges could be caused by the proposal, or exacerbated?
- What is the primary purpose of the proposed action, and what unintended consequences could result from the proposal for specific customer groups or other stakeholders?
- Is there any data or reporting that would be appropriate to require related to the measure, to ensure that its consequences, including inequitable or differential impacts, are understood, and monitored over time?

Because we operate within a legal framework that requires certain actions to support our decisions, it is important that the equity lens be created in a way that is consistent with, and supportive of the applicable legal requirements. This process will take time and is the focus of some of the future efforts described below. Nevertheless, the application of the equity lens remains a priority, as it will contribute to ensuring that decision makers across the agency conscientiously and rigorously examine the impacts of their actions on communities and individuals who have historically faced inequity or may be disproportionately affected by the agency's decisions.

To date, we have taken the following actions with respect to an equity lens:

- Discussed the idea of an equity lens with outside stakeholders, including representatives of environmental justice communities, and received feedback on our proposed use of such a tool.
- Tested the types of questions listed above by incorporating them into a PUC staff memo that analyzed the protections customers needed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Reviewed the use of an equity lens by other organizations, including state and local government agencies.
- Created an internal workgroup that is developing expertise on the topic of an equity lens and is charged with developing a proposal.
- Started work to understand how an equity lens can best be incorporated into the agency's work in a manner that is supportive of, and consistent with our statutory and other legal duties.
- Reviewed utility dockets with customer impacts through an equity lens which has informed staff testimony, reports, and engagement with stakeholders and the utilities in docket proceedings.

In 2024, the PUC began additional diversity, equity and inclusion training for all employees to continue educating our staff on concepts and examples of the importance of diversity, equity and inclusion as it relates

to our state's history as well as our future and how that impacts our work. We are now seeing this work manifest in several of our dockets, where previously we would see case by case acknowledgement of environmental justice issues, we are now seeing a larger elevation and acknowledgement of the impacts of differently situated Oregonians in many of our dockets. The PUC DEI Training Initiative underscores the agency's steadfast commitment to integrating diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) principles into all facets of its operations. This initiative mandates that all employees complete one DEI training module per quarter, offering valuable opportunities for introspection, constructive dialogue, and the practical application of DEI concepts through facilitated debriefing sessions. By delving into critical topics such as unconscious bias, disability inclusion, and systemic inequities, the program empowers staff to effectively identify and address historical and contemporary barriers to equity within the utility sector. This initiative aligns seamlessly with the PUC's broader DEI strategy, which strives to cultivate a workplace culture that celebrates diversity and fosters a shared understanding of the disparate impacts of historical policies.

Key to the initiative's success is a structured framework of responsibilities for staff, division leaders, and the DEI Director, ensuring meaningful engagement and comprehensive support. This framework complements efforts to integrate equity-focused considerations into utility planning and decision-making processes, informed by the overarching objectives outlined in the Environmental Justice Council's priorities. Through meticulous quarterly progress monitoring and robust feedback mechanisms, the PUC aims to construct a more inclusive regulatory framework and establish actionable pathways to advance equity for Oregon's diverse communities, particularly those historically underrepresented in decision-making processes. We will continue this work in 2025, hosting additional trainings and follow-up conversations with staff to further educate DEI concepts and integrate them into our work across program teams.

## Interagency and Community Coordination

The Commission is actively engaged with our state agency and community partners on advancing environmental justice across our areas of responsibility. Coordination with these organizations helps to ensure we are engaging impacted groups consistently as a state and optimizing opportunities to advance environmental justice goals.

- **Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ):** The PUC works with DEQ to ensure utility operations comply with state environmental standards, particularly focusing on reducing pollution from power plants and other utility operations. We also collaborate on initiatives such as promoting a just energy transition and reaching state clean energy targets and carbon emission reduction goals.
- **Oregon Department of Energy (ODOE):** Coordination with ODOE involves planning for the state's energy future, including integrating renewable energy sources into the grid, including small scale and community-based renewable energy projects. We also engage with ODOE on their developing state energy strategy and intersectional opportunities for federal funding going to communities for clean, affordable, and sustainable energy investments.
- **Oregon Housing and Community Services (OHCS):** The PUC works with OHCS to understand energy affordability in Oregon, especially for low-income households. We have made meaningful steps in coordinating opportunities for data sharing and categorical eligibility across energy assistance

programs and customer protections. This work has improved participation rates and reduced barriers to enrollment for programs that promote energy security and affordability.

- **Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT):** The PUC provides technical guidance to ODOT in support of interagency State planning to optimize investments in transportation electrification charging infrastructure to benefit a wide range of residents and businesses.
- **Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust):** The PUC oversees Energy Trust’s management of utility customer funds, focusing on cost-effective energy efficiency. This oversight is structured through a contractual agreement that dictates the use of these funds and significant coordination with the PUC on program terms and requirements. The PUC monitors Energy Trust’s performance through reporting mechanisms, budget review, and annual performance measures to benchmark effectiveness, including on equity, while engaging with the organization throughout the year to leverage opportunities to partner with utilities on energy efficiency and energy burden mitigation strategy. Additionally, a Commissioner is represented on the Energy Trust’s board.
- **Local Governments and Community Organizations:** We work with local governments, Tribal Nations, and community-based organizations to inform regulatory strategy and decision-making through a diverse and inclusive lens. Collaborating with groups and organizations immersed in the community generates opportunities for bidirectional education and engagement with the public on issues moving through the PUC and impacting the energy system.

## Policy Implementation

The PUC continues to implement and advance environmental justice policies from legislation passed in the 2021, 2022, and 2023 legislative sessions. Many of these policies and legislative mandates will be implemented over the next several years and will remain a primary focus in our Environmental Justice Council annual updates.

### Climate Change

#### 1. Clean Energy ([HB 2021](#) – 2021):

The PUC has recently been tasked with an increasing number of legislative directives related to climate and clean energy (e.g., [HB 2021](#); [HB 2165](#); [SB 762](#)). The PUC is actively implementing this legislation through various actions, including initiating new investigations and rulemakings, as well as incorporating new directives in existing proceedings undertaken to address rapid and significant change in the electric and natural gas industries.

Below are links to high level summaries of these activities in four key areas related to climate and clean energy. 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 a broad overview of the legislative 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.

- [Utility Planning and Programs](#)

- [Wildfire Prevention and Mitigation](#)
- [Transportation Electrification](#)
- [Equity and Impacted Communities](#)

## 2. Climate Package ([HB 3409](#) - 2023):

- Consolidates several policy initiatives aimed at addressing climate change, including promoting energy efficiency and supporting technology adoption.
- **PUC Actions:** The Commission has been involved in implementing provisions relevant to utilities, focusing on energy efficiency and supporting accelerated adoption of climate-friendly technologies.

## 3. Energy Package ([HB 3630](#) - 2023):

- Addresses various aspects of energy policy, including assistance to environmental justice communities and developing a comprehensive state energy strategy.
- **PUC Actions:** The PUC aligns its work with the goals set out in the package, assisting energy projects in environmental justice communities, and contributing to the development of a state energy strategy.

## Public Engagement & Energy Affordability

### 1. Differential Energy Burden/Intervenor Funding ([HB 2475](#) - 2021):

- Expands considerations for rate classifications, discounts, and programs based on differential energy burdens on low-income and environmental justice communities.
- **PUC Actions:** The PUC has worked with utilities and stakeholders to implement low barrier income-based bill discounts across five of the six investor-owned utilities. Monthly bill discounts have reduced monthly household energy costs for income-qualified customers from 15 to 95 percent, based on utility and household need. We continue to pursue the implementation of this authority in 2024 and 2025.

We have also developed an intervenor funding application and training opportunities for accessing the environmental justice funding and have seen multiple new intervenors express interest and/or utilize the funding in PUC proceedings. Implementing the environmental justice intervenor funding mechanism, has since allowed for better representation and consideration of these communities in our processes.

### 2. Environmental Justice Council ([HB 4077](#) - 2022):

- Renames and expands the Environmental Justice Task Force into the Council (EJC), emphasizing the development of an environmental justice mapping tool. Creates new deliverables for the EJC and calls upon state natural resource agencies to engage with the Council on developing the mapping tool.
- **PUC Actions:** The PUC collaborates with the EJC, preparing to utilize the environmental justice mapping tool for informed decision-making.

### 3. Low-Income and Crisis Assistance ([HB 2739](#) - 2021):

- Revises programs to increase funding and expand support for low-income electric bill payment and crisis assistance.
- **PUC Actions:** PUC ensures the effective distribution and monitoring of funds to assist vulnerable households.

#### Other Areas Impacting Environmental Justice

##### 1. Public Purpose Charge ([HB 3141](#) - 2021):

- Changes to public purpose charge collections, emphasizing equitable energy conservation funding and establishing equity metrics for environmental justice impacts.
- **PUC Actions:** The PUC sets up and applies equity metrics to ensure energy conservation and renewable generation efforts are distributed equitably, focusing on those historically underserved.

##### 2. Connecting Oregon for the 21st Century (HB 4092 - 2022, continued in 2023):

- Enhances broadband connectivity across Oregon, focusing on underserved communities.
- **PUC Actions:** We contribute to improving telecommunications infrastructure, especially in underserved areas.

#### Support for Environmental Justice Policies

As part of this report, state natural resource agencies, including the PUC, were asked to share what resources are needed to further develop and implement environmental justice policies at the agency. At this time, the PUC has not identified any specific training needs or funding that would directly impact 2025 activities; however, there are some areas that may generate requests for support in future iterations of this report. For example:

- **Energy Burden Mitigation:** Programs authorized under the Energy Affordability Act are generally rate-payer funded and limited to investor-owned utility customers. As rate pressure attributable to factors beyond the PUC's authority increase, the PUC has considered whether public funding is needed to sustain the level of energy assistance environmental justice communities in Oregon require.

## VII. Environmental Justice Mapping Tool Involvement (ORS 182.550 Section 5)

ORS 182.550 Section 5: Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.

The designated PUC EJC liaison continues to attend and engage with the EJC and Oregon Department of Environmental Quality on the development of the environmental justice mapping tool. This includes participating in the environmental justice mapping tool subcommittee and working with the Oregon Department of Administrative Services to describe and provide data sources and metrics managed and/or utilized by the PUC to inform our work, particularly where environmental justice is implied.

## VIII. Environmental Justice Mapping Council Engagement 2025

In 2025, the PUC is interested in continuing to foster robust and productive engagement with the EJC. We are looking forward to participating in EJC meetings as the scope and guidance of the Council continues to be refined. We hope to deepen our understanding of how to enhance our role as a natural resource agency with guidance provided by the EJC, particularly in areas that directly impact utility regulation and services. A key aspect of this collaboration will be contributing to the environmental justice mapping tool as a sub-committee participant. We are committed to ensuring this tool is comprehensive, reflecting the diverse needs of Oregonians and providing actionable insights for both the state and the PUC to advance justice focused outcomes and equitable policy implementation. We hope to work closely with the EJC on establishing inclusive and meaningful definitions to capture environmental justice communities as impacted groups in our regulation of the state investor-owned utilities. We also understand the importance of establishing clear accountability metrics and goals related to environmental justice and equity and hope the EJC can help inform how we might tailor these measures to meet the needs of environmental justice communities.

## IX. Environmental Justice Council Legislation Citations

In 2024 the PUC was not identified in any new legislation where Environmental Justice Council or Environmental Justice Task Force engagement is cited in the legislation.

## X. Meaningful Engagement Related Legislation

### PUC Impacted Legislation Regarding Meaningful Engagement

Oregon's HB 2021 (2021) emphasizes the necessity of meaningful engagement in the state's just transition to clean energy. It defines environmental justice communities as those historically underserved and adversely impacted by environmental and energy policies. This legislation mandates that electric companies engage environmental justice communities in the development of their clean energy plans. It requires electric companies to establish and involve Utility Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Groups in developing biennial reports assessing the impact of their actions on environmental justice communities.

## Collaboration on Mandated Engagement

Oregon’s HB 4077 (2021) requires state natural resource agencies, including the PUC, to collaborate amongst one another, and the Environmental Justice Council to ensure that the principles of environmental justice are ingrained in statewide policies and practices.

## XI. Looking Ahead (Optional)

In 2025, the PUC will seek to incorporate environmental justice considerations broadly into our work. A few key initiatives planned for 2025 include:

- **Phase 3 of HB 2475 Implementation:** Phase 3 of HB 2475 Implementation will include a number of initiatives, including a continuation of the data workstream rulemaking process, a permanent rulemaking process for the disconnection protection and arrearage management temporary rules passed in 2024, and a focus on rates.
- **Phase 2 of HB 2021 Implementation:** In 2025, the PUC plans to focus on data collection and evaluation, further exploration of equity in setting the rates that utility customers pay, identifying additional opportunities to target programs to environmental justice communities, and consideration of the environmental justice factors that may be considered beyond income.
- **Community Benefits Indicators (CBIs):** Through integrated resource planning for PacifiCorp and PGE and the PUC’s docket to modernize our planning and procurement processes, the PUC will work with utilities and stakeholders to ensure CBIs have greater impact into how utilities plan to meet a decarbonized future and the types of resources they acquire.
- **Public Process Experimentation:** Now that additional funding is available for broader participation in PUC processes, the PUC will continue to experiment with improvements to the accessibility and accountability of PUC processes. For example, the PUC is experimenting with new procedural approaches to promote the accessibility of the Idaho Power rate case.<sup>7</sup>
- **Energy Trust Activities in 2025:** The PUC direction to Energy Trust to develop more programs to better serve energy-burdened customers in environmental justice communities continues in 2025 with an expansion of no- and low-cost offers and an expansion of participating community-based organizations. Energy Trust utilizes its extensive trade ally network to serve as a sub-awardee for federal and municipal grants including federal HOMES and HEAR rebates, EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant, Solar for All Grant, and Portland Clean Energy Fund grants that aid low-income customers and stretch ratepayer funds across more Oregonians.

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<sup>7</sup> Learn more by reviewing this letter from PUC Staff’s letter on procedural equity here: <https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HAC/ue426hac326165054.pdf>.

## XII. Definitions

### ***Environmental Justice: (ORS 182.535 Section 3)***

“Environmental justice” means the equal protection from environmental and health risks, fair treatment and meaningful involvement in decision making of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, immigration status, income or other identities with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies that affect the environment in which people live, work, learn and practice spirituality and culture.

### **Environmental Justice Community: (ORS 182.535 Section 4)**

“Environmental justice community” includes communities of color, communities experiencing lower incomes, communities experiencing health inequities, tribal communities, rural communities, remote communities, coastal communities, communities with limited infrastructure and other communities traditionally underrepresented in public processes and adversely harmed by environmental and health hazards, including seniors, youth and persons with disabilities.

### **Meaningful Involvement: (ORS 182.535 Section 7)**

“Meaningful involvement” means:

- (a) Members of vulnerable populations have appropriate opportunities to participate in decisions about a proposed activity that will affect their environment or health;
- (b) Public involvement can influence a decision maker’s decision;
- (c) The concerns of all participants involved are considered in the decision-making process; and
- (d) Decision makers seek out and facilitate the involvement of members of vulnerable populations

### **Environmental Burdens: (ORS 182.535 Section 2)**

Environmental burden” means the environmental and health risks to communities caused by the combined historic, current and projected future effects of:

- (a) Exposure to conventional pollution and toxic hazards in the air or in or on water or land;
- (b) Adverse environmental conditions caused or made worse by other contamination or pollution; and
- (c) Changes in the environment resulting from climate change, such as water insecurity, drought, flooding, wildfire, smoke and other air pollution, extreme heat, loss of traditional cultural resources or foods, ocean acidification, sea-level rise and increases in infectious disease.

### **Community-Based Renewable Energy (ORS 469A.400 Section 2)**

Means one or more renewable energy systems that interconnect to utility distribution or transmission assets and may be combined with microgrids, storage systems or demand response measures, or energy-related infrastructure that promotes climate resiliency or other such measures, and that:

Provide a direct benefit to a particular community through a community-benefits agreement or direct ownership by a local government, nonprofit community organization or federally recognized Indian tribe; or Result in increased resiliency or community stability, local jobs, economic development or direct energy cost savings to families and small business.

### **Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group (ORS 469A.425)**

(1) An electric company that files a clean energy plan under ORS 469A.415 shall convene a Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group. The members of the electric company's Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group will be determined by the electric company with input from stakeholders that represent the interests of customers or affected entities within the electric company's service territory. Members must include representatives of environmental justice communities and low-income ratepayers and may include representatives from other affected entities within the electric company's service territory.

(2)(a) The electric company shall develop, in consultation with the Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group, a biennial report that assesses the community benefits and impacts of the electric company and shall file the biennial report with the Public Utility Commission. The biennial report must include a description of the following:

(A) Energy burden and disconnections for residential customers and disconnections for small commercial customers;

(B) Opportunities to increase contracting with businesses owned by women, veterans or Black, Indigenous, or People of Color;

(C) Actions within environmental justice communities within the electric company's service territory intended to improve resilience during adverse conditions or facilitate investments in the distribution system, including investments in facilities that generate non-emitting electricity;

(D) Distribution of infrastructure or grid investments and upgrades in environmental justice communities in the electric company's service territory, including infrastructure or grid investments that facilitate the electric company's compliance with the clean energy targets set forth in ORS 469A.410;

(E) Social, economic or environmental justice co-benefits that result from the electric company's investments, contracts or internal practices;

(F) Customer experience, including a review of annual customer satisfaction surveys;

(G) Actions to encourage customer engagement; and

(H) Other items as determined by the electric company and the electric company's Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group.

(b) The electric company may engage the Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group to advise on other matters, including but not limited to:

(A) The development and equitable implementation of a clean energy plan as determined in ORS 469A.415;

(B) The development and equitable implementation of a distribution system plan;

(C) Equitable contracting practices; and

(D) Best practices and strategies for reducing energy burden and disconnections in the electric company's service territory.

(3) The commission shall establish a process for an electric company to contemporaneously recover the cost associated with the development of biennial reports and the costs associated with compensation or reimbursement for time and travel of members of a Community Benefits and Impacts Advisory Group. [2021 c.508 §6]

### **Equity Metrics (ORS 757.747)**

The Public Utility Commission shall establish, and update no less than once every four years, equity metrics for the purpose of assessing, addressing and creating accountability for environmental justice in the expenditure

and investment of funds collected pursuant to ORS 757.054, through natural gas tariffs or through public purpose charges pursuant to ORS 757.612 and paid to a nongovernmental entity. The equity metrics and each update required by this section must reflect feedback gathered through a public process that is managed by the commission and that, at a minimum, includes representatives of environmental justice communities.

## XIII. Appendix

### [House Bill 4077 \(2022\)](#)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Council, the Council's responsibility to develop an environmental justice mapping tool, develop a biannual report to the Governor, and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Council.

### [Senate Bill 420 \(2007\)](#)

Legislation establishing the Environmental Justice Task Force, the predecessor for the Environmental Justice Council. It also includes requirements for the Task Force to submit biannual reports to the Governor and the requirement for natural resource agencies to submit an annual report to the Environmental Justice Task Force.

### [ORS 182.550 Reports by natural resource agencies](#)

All directors of natural resource agencies, and other agency directors as the Governor may designate, shall report annually to the Environmental Justice Task Force and to the Governor on the results of the agencies' efforts to:

- Address environmental justice issues;
- Increase public participation of individuals and communities affected by agencies' decisions;
- Determine the effect of the agencies' decisions on environmental justice communities;
- Improve plans to further the progress of environmental justice in Oregon; and
- Utilize the environmental justice mapping tool developed under section 12 of this 2022 Act.

## Related Reports and Documents

[Oregon Public Utility Commission Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Plan \(2023\)](#)

[Oregon Public Utility Commission Natural Gas Fact Finding Report \(2023\)](#)

[Senate Bill 844 Progress Report \(2023\)](#)

[Senate Bill 978 Report: Actively Adapting to the Changing Electricity Sector \(2018\)](#)

[Oregon Public Utility Commission 2023 Legislative Session Overview](#)

[Oregon Public Utility Commission 2022 Legislative Session Overview](#)

[Oregon Public Utility Commission 2021 Legislative Session Overview](#)

[Oregon Public Utility Commission Report of Executive Order 20-04 \(2020\)](#)