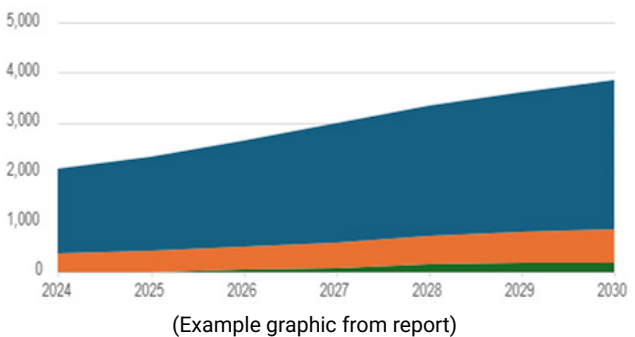


STAYING CONNECTED

The inaugural POWER Act Biennial Report



Over the past year, data centers and their impact on Oregon’s energy future continues to be a topic of interest. The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) recently submitted its first POWER Act Biennial Report, a major step forward in how Oregon manages unprecedented load growth.

The POWER Act, passed by the Legislature last year, gave the PUC new tools to better understand the costs and risks that come with rapid data center growth in investor-owned utility (IOU) service areas. And since then, the Commission has been moving quickly. Active dockets for Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power are already underway or at completion stages, each focused on ensuring the POWER Act is implemented effectively and transparently.

One early accomplishment is the Commission’s approval of PGE’s updated rate schedules under Order No. 26-239. These updated rates led to rate decreases for residential, commercial, and industrial customers at a time when affordability is top-of-mind. Meanwhile, data centers in PGE’s service territory now pay 29 percent more. This demonstrates the POWER Act’s directive to ensure more equitable distribution of costs.

Commissioner Power noted the importance of this work by saying, “As Oregon navigates continued growth in energy demand, our responsibility is to ensure everyone pays their fair share. The POWER Act gives us the tools to keep up with new large load growth while staying focused on affordability, reliability, and planning for the future.”

The report also helps paint a picture of what’s ahead. Today, data centers account for about 15 percent of current IOU electricity load, which is expected to grow to 25 percent by 2030. Regional and national forecasts show similar trends, with the Pacific Northwest expected to see data center load growth double by 2030.

It’s important to note that the POWER Act is only one part of a broader statewide conversation. Governor Kotek’s Data Center Advisory Committee will release its learnings and questions report this fall on topics including water and land usage, economic impacts, and the demand on energy.

The Commission’s next major step is addressing Pacific Power’s POWER Act implementation this fall.

To learn more, review the full [POWER Act Biennial Report](#).



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Strengthening Commissioner Support Through the New Commission Advisor Structure

The Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) has implemented a new structure to strengthen support for commissioners and enhance the agency’s decision-making process. For the first time, each Commissioner has a dedicated Commission Advisor who provides policy research, briefing preparation, and coordination with PUC staff, among other responsibilities. This supports deeper engagement on complex subjects and more efficient review of the many detailed filings and emerging issues in the utility sector.

Housed in the Executive Office, Commission Advisors can talk with each other without violating the public meetings law. They’re mindful to avoid creating serial communication between the Commissioners on the substance of public meeting items. Like Commissioners, they avoid talking with staff witnesses about contested cases.

Below we’ve highlighted the role of advisors, areas of focus, and perspectives from Commission Advisors to provide insight into their work. Adding advisors reflects the PUC’s commitment to transparent processes and consistent decision-making while valuing the expertise of staff.

Chair Letha Tawney’s Advisor — Garrett Martin

What drew you to the Commission Advisor role at the PUC?

Garrett, who has been with the PUC since 2019, felt the position fit well with his background in consulting and state government. In previous roles, he often had to juggle many topics quickly, and he saw this role as a natural continuation of that work.

Primary responsibilities in supporting Chair Tawney:

Garrett focuses heavily on improving information flow, both within the PUC and externally with sister agencies, the Legislature, and regional entities. Internally, he helps the Chair dive into special topics where bandwidth is limited and ensures she receives the information needed to make effective decisions.

Externally, he coordinates priority outreach work, such as wildfire mitigation, and makes sure requests from other agencies for PUC input are addressed on time.

What he finds most rewarding:

Garrett enjoys seeing the Commission’s complex work completed effectively and efficiently. He notes that while his role is often small in the broader scope of PUC activities, the agency is recognized nationally for leadership across multiple topics, despite having fewer staff than many other commissions.

He says, “We punch above our weight class.” He credits this to the culture fostered within the agency and the leadership of commissioners and the Commission’s experienced staff.

One thing he appreciates about his commissioner:

He admires Chair Tawney’s reputation as a thought leader in the West. Her ability to command attention in the energy sector makes the work exciting, and Garrett enjoys the challenge of keeping pace and finding ways to support her effectively.

Outside work activities that keep him grounded:

Garrett describes his household as complete with a loving wife, creative daughter, talkative mother-in-law, fetch-obsessed dog, grouchy cat, and a reckless kitten.

He coaches his daughter’s recreation-league soccer team, which keeps him humble regarding his capacity to convey basic concepts. Garret enjoys hiking, skiing, video games, and reading fantasy and science fiction. He’s currently working his way through the Dungeon Crawler Carl series.

Commissioner Les Perkins’ Advisor — Peter Harkema

What drew you to the Commission Advisor role at the PUC?

Peter, who started at the Commission in June of this year, has a long history of working on policy issues in Oregon and across the Northwest, which drew him to this role.

From wildfire and data centers to climate policy and transmission planning, he saw this position as an opportunity to engage in a diversity of interesting and important topics.

Primary responsibilities in supporting Commissioner Perkins:

His role is evolving, but Peter currently serves as a sounding board for Commissioner Perkins as he works through issues. He also engages alongside Commissioner Perkins with stakeholders, agencies, and tribes who take an interest in the Commission’s work.

What he finds most rewarding:

Peter appreciates the opportunity to engage with the diversity of topics the Commission tackles and appreciates getting to know the team at the PUC.

One thing he appreciates about his commissioner:

He notes that Commissioner Perkins takes a very collaborative approach to his work, whether with Peter, other Commission staff, or external partners, and he appreciates this approach to the work.

Outside work activities that keep him grounded:

Peter and his wife have three children that keep them busy and he notes, “sometimes grounded.” They are also currently hosting an exchange student from Belgium. In his free time, Peter is outdoors fishing, trail running, hunting, and rafting.

Commissioner Karin Power’s Advisor — Casey Bage

What drew you to the Commission Advisor role at the PUC?

Casey has a long fascination of electric and water systems. Growing up in Oak Park, California during the 2000-2001 electricity crisis and hearing about his aunt’s work in utility spaces shaped his appreciation for reliable power.

That exposure with his academic work on PNW fuel mix and renewable energy adoption at Willamette University, and electricity law and regulation at Lewis & Clark Law School, solidified his interest in utility regulation.

Casey noted, “That’s a long-winded way of saying I have always wanted to be a part of making sure the lights stay on.”

Primary responsibilities in supporting your Commissioner Power:

Casey’s work varies depending on Commissioner Power’s priorities and areas of focus. As a lawyer, he can provide legal context to support preparation for public meetings and contested cases.

He also acts as an additional set of eyes and ears to help track issues, coordinate with PUC staff and executive team, and streamline information flow.

Casey collaborates with the advisor team on broader Commission topics and recently led PUC’s POWER Act Legislative Report during the Legislative Affairs Director’s leave.

What he finds most rewarding:

Casey values building internal connections throughout the PUC. He has had conversations with staff to dig into their work and expertise.

Casey notes he feels lucky to work with an intelligent and thoughtful team who reminds him that he’s part of something greater than himself.

One thing he appreciates about his commissioner:

Casey appreciates Commissioner Power’s sense of humor, especially in our demanding and fast-paced work.

He also appreciates Commissioner Power’s wealth of experience outside of the PUC that informs his understanding of issues before the Commission. He notes that he learns something new from her every week.

Outside of work activities to stay grounded:

Since moving from Southern California to Oregon in 2005, Casey adjusted to the climate and has embraced activities, including mushroom foraging and gardening.

To think and unplug, Casey heads to the forest to identify some fungus. He is also a father of two (ages 6 and 3), keeping him in fatherhood mode, which includes introducing them to his millennial music. He recently joined Garrett in the ranks of soccer coach to his 6-year-old as well.

Casey says, “Nothing has humbled me more than parenting.”

E² = mc³: The Physics of Energy Equity and Conscious Regulation

By Ezell Watson III, DEI Program Director



When Albert Einstein introduced $E = mc^2$, he fundamentally altered our understanding of the universe by proving that energy and mass are not distinct entities — they are different forms of the exact same thing. Mass is simply concentrated energy; energy is mass liberated.

In our world of public service and utility regulation, a similar principle applies: the systems we regulate, the policies we shape, and the communities we serve are intrinsically connected.

We cannot separate the energy flowing across Oregon’s grid from the people and communities who rely on it. Energy equity is not an abstract concept existing in isolation; it is made tangible through our collective action, our shared responsibility, and the energy we bring to our mission each day.

To explore this connection, the PUC recently launched our new podcast, $E^2 = mc^3$, translating the classic formula into a modern framework for our agency: Energy Equity = Mission-Critical Compassionate Consciousness.

The formula asks us to view our daily duties through an intentional lens. True equity requires more than technical compliance — it calls for a conscious awareness of how decisions ripple across historically underserved, rural, and vulnerable communities.

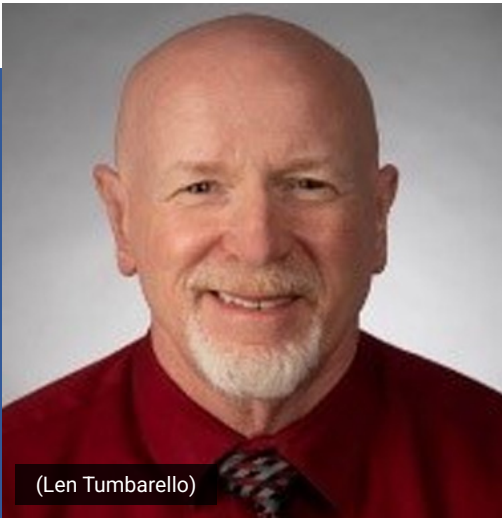
- What are you critically conscious of in your day-to-day work? When analyzing dockets, evaluating rate designs, reviewing safety standards, or streamlining operational support, where do you see the human impact?
- How do you bring compassion into technical decision-making? Where can our processes be more accessible, empathetic, and responsive to the lived experiences of everyday Oregonians?
- How does your specific role at the PUC support a more equitable energy landscape? Whether working in administrative support, policy analysis, IT, legal, or consumer services, what part of the equation do you hold?

Every division across the PUC plays an essential part in this system. The challenge before us is to actively seek out ways to deepen our engagement, bridge technical expertise with community-centered awareness, and define what our personal “formula” for energy equity looks like in practice.

Tune into the $E^2 = mc^3$ podcast series to hear colleagues and leadership discuss these themes, share their journeys, and examine how compassionate consciousness fuels our shared regulatory mission. (Dropping Soon)



(Podcast producer, Ronnie Gatrey watches as Ezell Watson interviews Zhuoyi Zhao on the podcast)



(Len Tumbarello)

OBMP Logbook

From Observation to Advocacy: Telling Oregon Pilotage’s Story

A Message from Len Tumbarello, OBMP Executive Director

During my first several months as Executive Director of the Oregon Board of Maritime Pilots (OBMP), one of my highest priorities was getting out from behind the desk and experiencing Oregon pilotage firsthand.

I rode ships with pilots on the Columbia River and in Coos Bay, went offshore aboard a Columbia River Bar Pilots pilot boat, observed helicopter pilot-transfer operations, and traveled to the Marine Institute of Technology & Graduate Studies (MITAGS) simulator in Seattle to watch Columbia River Pilots conduct emergency bridge-avoidance training.

Those experiences gave me an invaluable appreciation for the proficiency, people, professionalism, and passion that make Oregon’s pilotage system one of the safest and most capable in the nation.

As we moved into the summer, however, my focus began to shift. The next phase of my work is increasingly about taking what I have learned and telling Oregon pilotage’s story.

Becoming an Ambassador for Oregon Pilotage

Most Oregonians rarely see a maritime pilot at work, yet every day highly trained pilots safely navigate large commercial vessels across the Columbia River Bar, along the Columbia and Willamette Rivers, and into Coos Bay.

Their work directly supports Oregon’s economy and maritime transportation system while protecting human life, our waterways, coastal and river communities, critical infrastructure, and the environment. That is a story worth telling.

During June, July, and August, I have placed greater emphasis on educating the public, elected officials, government partners, and the broader maritime community about the importance of maintaining safe, reliable, and efficient pilotage on Oregon waters.

One visible step has been the development and rollout of OBMP’s new logo and branding. This is more than simply giving the Board’s logo a new look.

Consistent professional branding helps establish a recognizable public identity for an organization whose important mission is often carried out largely outside public view. Our goal is to make OBMP and its mission more recognizable to Oregonians, policymakers and maritime stakeholders.

I have also continued participating in Harbor Safety Committee meetings and other regional maritime forums. These gatherings bring together pilots, the Coast Guard, ports, vessel operators, government agencies, and other maritime professionals to discuss the risks and challenges facing our waterways. They also provide an important opportunity for OBMP to listen, collaborate, and advocate for practical measures that enhance navigational safety.

Another particularly rewarding outreach opportunity has been involvement with Oregon State University’s Maritime Exposure & Training Program.

Programs such as this introduce people to Oregon’s maritime industry and help build greater understanding of the remarkable career opportunities and economic activity associated with our waterways. They also reinforce something I learned during my many years working in maritime workforce development: the future strength of our maritime industry depends upon exposing the next generation to it today.

My outreach has also increasingly included engagement with state leaders, legislators, transportation officials, and other decision-makers.

A particular area of emphasis has been raising awareness of vessel-to-bridge risks, such as the collapse of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, MD in March 2024 and lessons learned from the completed National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation, as well as encouraging continued collaboration among maritime pilots, bridge owners, and government agencies to protect critical transportation infrastructure.

Why This Matters

Oregon is a maritime state. Our waterways connect Oregon businesses and agricultural producers to national and international markets. Large commercial vessels moving safely through those waterways depend upon experienced pilots with extraordinary local knowledge, judgment, and training. OBMP’s responsibility is to help ensure that only well-qualified pilots are licensed to perform this critical public-safety function, but I believe we have another responsibility as well: helping Oregonians understand why pilotage matters.

That means getting outside our traditional circles. It means attending meetings, participating in educational programs, communicating through our website and LinkedIn presence, meeting with policymakers, strengthening our relationships with maritime partners, and finding new opportunities

to tell this story.

My first months as Executive Director were largely about seeing and learning. The next chapter is increasingly about educating, communicating, and advocating.

Whether speaking with a legislator, participating in a Harbor Safety Committee meeting, engaging with students, rolling out our updated OBMP logo, or simply explaining to an Oregonian what that pilot climbing aboard a ship is actually doing, the message remains the same: safe, reliable and efficient pilotage is essential to public safety, environmental protection, and the continued flow of maritime commerce that helps power Oregon’s economy.

I am proud to help tell that story — and even prouder to represent the exceptional maritime professionals who make it possible every day.



New logo explainer:

- The gold stars represent the nine OBMP board members.
- The 3 red & white Pilot flags represent the Oregon pilot associations and where their operations are headquartered.
- The State of Oregon flag represents that the OBMP serves Oregon’s constituents.
- The small gold ship represents the types of ships on Oregon waters in 1846 and the large ship represents current day.
- The tag line “Setting the Course since 1846” reps the long stay of the OBMP and its mission of management/oversight of the pilot associations.

Oregon Lifeline: Recent FCC Activity and Oregon's Response



What is Oregon Lifeline?

Oregon Lifeline provides eligible low-income households with a monthly discount on phone or high-speed internet service through participating carriers.

While the federal program provides monthly discounts of \$9.25 for high-speed internet and \$5.25 for phone service, Oregon adds an additional \$15 per month. Residents on federally recognized Tribal land qualify for an additional \$25. More than 30,000 Oregon households currently receive Lifeline benefits. Since the program was implemented in 1989, Oregon, specifically the Residential Service Protection Fund (RSPF) staff of the PUC, has directly managed Lifeline eligibility and enrollment through the PUC's RSPF unit.

For nearly 40 years, the state has verified both federal and Oregon Lifeline eligibility through a single consolidated application. This single point of contact makes the program more accessible for consumers seeking benefits from both programs.

Opt-Out Status

Oregon is currently one of two states with opt out status, which allows the state to check for duplicate enrollments. In 2012, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) created the National Lifeline Accountability Database (NLAD) to reduce duplicates because participating carriers in most other states and territories were handling applications.

There was no way for participating carriers to verify whether an applicant was already enrolled with another carrier. Oregon was already effectively performing this work in house with a duplicate enrollment rate of just 0.13% in 2013. As a result, the FCC granted Oregon opt-out status.

National Verifier Launch

The FCC launched the National Verifier in 2016 to shift eligibility verification entirely away from participating carriers in response to incidents of waste, fraud and abuse.

The National Verifier went live in Oregon in 2020, but because Oregon was already managing eligibility directly, this rollout did not change how the PUC's RSPF unit administered the program.

Recent National Developments

In early 2026, the FCC Office of Inspector General reported Oregon had five duplicate enrollments and 2,220 Lifeline subscriber records flagged as deceased from 2020-2025, suggesting these individuals remained enrolled after their date of death.

The RSPF unit reviewed every record and determined this apparent discrepancy reflected Oregon's quarterly reporting cycle. On average, subscribers remained enrolled for approximately 3.5 months after their date of death, consistent with the quarterly schedule, and other de-enrollments were further delayed by FCC-issued COVID-era waivers.

RSPF staff took the opportunity to further improve processes and Oregon's systems continue to detect deceased subscribers at higher rates than federal tools.

Following these findings, the FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking asking whether opt out status for Oregon (and Texas) should be discontinued.



Oregon’s Response

Oregon formally filed comments with the FCC supporting the continuation of state administration. The state emphasized its robust data matching processes and program oversight, including uncovering a major \$200 million enforcement case involving T-Mobile in 2020, demonstrate the value of maintaining opt-out status.

Looking Ahead

Oregon continues to verify eligibility for the Lifeline program with greater precision than federal systems.

For example, last month Oregon alerted the FCC that the Universal Service Administrative Company, the federal Lifeline administrator, appears to be inconsistently assessing Social Security income depending on the documents applicants submitted.

If the FCC ends Oregon’s opt out status, applicants will be required to complete separate applications, one for federal and one for state, ending the single, streamlined process Oregon has maintained for 40 years.



2025 Oregon Utility Statistics Published
[View the PDF of the report online](#)

Valence Project Update

The Valence Project now has a target launch date tentatively scheduled for January 2027.

That date anchors the work ahead of us.

BizApps has run the Commission's dockets and discovery for over three decades, but it's built on source code no longer supported by Microsoft.

Every day it stays in service is a day the agency carries real risk: system failure, records that don't meet retention standards, and case files that are harder to secure than they should be.

Replacing it isn't just a technology upgrade, it's how the PUC keeps regulatory proceedings running reliably for the utilities, staff, and stakeholders who depend on them.

Round one of User Acceptance Testing (UAT) wrapped up earlier this year, and the feedback drove real changes. DorgerSoft has spent the months since reworking configurations and resolving the issues users flagged.

Round two of UAT starts in November, focused on confirming those fixes hold up and the system performs the way it needs to before go-live.

Getting to January 11th successfully depends on continued engagement from system users. Round two of UAT is the last major checkpoint before launch, and the feedback participants provide will determine whether the system is ready. We'll be asking for that input directing as testing gets underway.

Thanks to everyone who has taken part in shaping this project so far. Your input has made a real difference, and it will continue to matter as we head into this final stretch!

