



November 17, 2025

Chair Lively
Vice Chairs Gamba and Levy
House Committee on Climate, Energy, and Environment
900 Court Street NW
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Oregon Energy Strategy

Chair Lively, Vice-Chairs Gamba and Levy, and Members of the Committee,

For the record, my name is Tucker Billman, and I am the Director of Government Relations for the Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association – or ORECA. ORECA represents Oregon’s 18 not-for-profit, consumer-owned electric cooperatives, who serve the geographic majority of the state and about 500,000 Oregonians. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today regarding the Oregon Department of Energy’s State Energy Strategy.

I represented Oregon’s consumer-owned utilities – or COUs – on ODOE’s State Energy Strategy Advisory Group. I am grateful to have been asked to provide my perspective as a member of that Advisory Group today.

The strategy includes 42 policy recommendations that ODOE believes will achieve Oregon’s goals of expanding access to reliable, clean energy at an affordable price. A few policy proposals may help get us there – like the brief mention that Oregon should explore emerging technologies like small modular nuclear reactors, and the high priority that ODOE placed on addressing the risks of wildfire liability to electric cooperatives in Oregon.¹ We appreciate ODOE’s willingness to take leadership on this issue. We sincerely believe wildfire is an existential threat. Every Oregonian plays an important role in mitigating wildfire risk, and while electric cooperatives are doing more than ever before to mitigate new ignitions, we need the state’s help.

However, the on-paper strategy developed by ODOE, which states that hydroelectricity has “supported economic growth and equitable access to electricity in the Pacific Northwest for decades,²” is wholly inconsistent with Oregon’s already declared strategy – litigating the operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System (FCRPS) with potentially disastrous consequences for the state and region.

This strategy – Oregon’s real energy strategy – to my knowledge included no official advisory group. If there was such a group, Oregon’s COUs were completely excluded from participation.

¹ Report: Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Energy Strategy (November 2025): 39, 60, 108

² Oregon Energy Strategy: 57

ODOE's Energy Strategy recognizes that "the scale of expected demand growth in the electricity sector is historic,³" while acknowledging that hydropower "provides some of the most affordable energy for Oregonians."⁴ Additionally, ODOE's Energy Strategy puts emphasis on the costs associated with climate change, making the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions a priority.⁵ Meanwhile, the state's litigation of the FCRPS is more likely to increase electricity costs and greenhouse gas emissions, while decreasing reliability.

In fact, according to the 2020 Environmental Impact Statement that was conducted for the operations of the FCRPS, at its worst, the litigation strategy will lead to increased likelihood of rolling blackouts, greater greenhouse gas emissions, and more expensive power – with substantial rate increases likely.⁶

Put simply, litigation is a bad energy strategy.

Ironically, the 42 policy recommendations contained in ODOE's Energy Strategy document are dependent on business as usual for hydroelectricity in Oregon. In fact, when looking towards 2050, the strategy states that "hydropower remains a foundation of the electricity system."⁷ This begs the question – with the state's recent court filings against hydroelectricity, is ODOE's strategy already outdated? Is it functionally obsolete? We believe the strategy will be almost entirely ineffectual if the state's lawsuit is successful.

Oregonians at every level – including elected leaders across our state – have been gifted a gem. The Federal Columbia River Power System provides the firm, baseload generation necessary to deploy new renewable energy resources, meet the needs of today and prepare for the load growth of tomorrow, all while reliably serving Oregonians when they need it the most. Entire regions of the country – and the world – envy the resources we have. It's disappointing that Oregon does not share this appreciation.

Until Oregon comes to the table with consumer-owned utilities and the many others who rely on the FCRPS for economic output, the strategy before you today is incomplete and incongruous with the direction our state is already moving. It has never been more important that we rise to the occasion and meet the energy needs of Oregonians. Now is the time to talk, not fight.

I am happy to answer any questions.



Tucker Billman

Director of Government Relations
Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association

³ Oregon Energy Strategy: 38

⁴ Oregon Energy Strategy: 39

⁵ Oregon Energy Strategy: 39

⁶ [Executive Summary: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, Bonneville Power Administration Columbia River System Operations Environmental Impact Statement \(July 2020\): 35 and 36](#)

⁷ Oregon Energy Strategy: 30