



Oregon
Rural
Electric
Cooperative
Association

January 14, 2026

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.

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 reactors¹ and the high priority that ODOE placed on addressing the risks of wildfire liability to electric cooperatives in Oregon². We believe Oregon should repeal its ban on nuclear power and we appreciate ODOE’s willingness to take leadership on the wildfire issue, as it poses an existential threat to our solvency. Wildfire is an every Oregonian problem, 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 decades³ – is wholly inconsistent with Oregon’s already declared strategy – litigating the operations of the Federal Columbia River Power System – or FCRPS – with potentially disastrous consequences for the state and region.

¹ Report: Oregon Department of Energy, Oregon Energy Strategy (November 2025): 112

² Oregon Energy Strategy: 39, 60, 108

³ Oregon Energy Strategy: 57

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.

ODOE’s Energy Strategy recognizes that “the scale of expected demand growth in the electricity sector is historic⁴,” while acknowledging that hydropower “provides some of the most affordable energy for Oregonians⁵.” Additionally, ODOE’s Energy Strategy puts emphasis on the costs associated with climate change, making the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions a priority⁶. 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 likely⁷. Both this study and recent court filings in response to Oregon’s litigation suggest the potential for blackouts in the region to increase to one or more blackouts every three years, and for costs to increase by \$150million - \$200million annually to replace the lost power supply. These costs – and the risks of these blackouts – are absorbed by Bonneville Power Administration ratepayers directly. Meaning Oregonians at the end of the line.

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 system⁸”. This begs the question – with the state’s ongoing lawsuit 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 is disappointing that Oregon does not appreciate these resources in the same way.

Until Oregon comes to the table with consumer-owned utilities and the many others who rely on the FCRPS for economic output and reliable electricity supply, 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.

⁴ Oregon Energy Strategy: 38

⁵ Oregon Energy Strategy: 39

⁶ Oregon Energy Strategy: 39

⁷ [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](#)

⁸ Oregon Energy Strategy: 30

Peter DeFazio, former Congressman from Oregon, said in a recent Op-Ed that “hydropower is a cornerstone of the Northwest’s clean energy future,” and he encouraged Oregon to channel our energy into pragmatic partnership, not lawsuits. It is long past time we heed his advice.

Thank you again for the time. I am happy to answer any questions.

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Tucker Billman

Director of Government Relations
Oregon Rural Electric Cooperative Association