**Oregon's Renewable Options Program – Concept Overview**

*Clean, affordable, and resilient energy for communities across Oregon*

Oregon’s Renewable Options (ORO) Program would create a new, voluntary way for local and tribal governments, and local service districts to make decisions regarding the energy sources that power and provide resilience for the residents and businesses in their communities. Oregon’s communities are diverse; if enacted, this flexible program would enable communities to achieve clean energy goals while keeping electricity rates affordable, creating and sustaining energy-related jobs, investing in equitable economic development, promoting community resilience, and supporting a healthy environment.

This flexible voluntary program would:

* Prioritize Oregon’s communities’ needs, such as increasing demand for clean, affordable, and resilient energy;
* Enable participants to remain partners with their existing electric utility;
* Provide affordable, transparent electricity rates;
* Increase renewable electricity, such as solar, wind, hydropower, biomass, and geothermal power;
* Support regional job creation, equitable economic development, community resilience, and a clean environment
* Encourage the development of small, distributed renewable energy projects that are best able to provide local resilience (e.g., clean energy microgrids powered by in-conduit and small-scale hydropower projects, and community solar projects) that
	+ Generate less than 20 megawatts (MW) of power; and
	+ Provide a unique variety of local economic, environmental, and resiliency benefits.

Community Benefits

* Gives participants a voice in choosing and catalyzing the development of the renewable energy projects that power their communities;
* Prioritizes community-driven equitable economic development community goals related to electricity pricing, community energy resilience, job creation, and environmental benefits;
* Establishes a transparent process to explicitly solicit input from and address the needs of participating customers -- especially those that are disadvantaged, climate-vulnerable, and energy-burdened -- via public stakeholder meetings and incorporation of stakeholder feedback; and
* Provides technical assistance for community energy resilience planning.

Resilience Benefits

* Encourages small (< 20 MW), distributed renewable energy facilities that can form the backbone of microgrids to provide community energy resilience;
* Increases resilience to extreme events, such as wildfire and earthquakes, by enabling backup power for critical emergency operations centers, hospitals, police and fire stations, emergency shelters, and buildings that are necessary to provide basic services to communities as they begin to restore functions and return to normal life, such as schools, housing, certain retail stores, and banks; and
* Helps prevent power disruptions due to Public Safety Power Shutoff (PSPS) from hazardous wildfire conditions.

Economic Benefits

* Provides low-cost energy that can include up to 100% renewable electricity from both small and large projects;
* Enables municipalities, residents, and businesses to reinvest in their communities;
* Facilitates rural community hydropower production as part of statewide irrigation modernization efforts;
* Creates new clean energy-related jobs;
* Provides a transparent, voluntary program for clean, reliable, and affordable electricity via continued partnerships with existing electric utilities and oversight by the Oregon Public Utilities Commission; and
* Enables residential and business customers to opt out of the program.

Environmental Benefits

* Reduces pollution;
* Conserves water; and
* Invests in clean water and clean air.

What Are the Steps Involved in the ORO Program?

*Step 1: Creation of the ORO Program*

* The Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) launches the ORO Program.

*Step 2: Interested Community Creates an ORO Program Application*

* An interested community (led by a local or tribal government or local service district) conducts an engagement process to explicitly solicit input from and address the needs of community members, especially those that are disadvantaged, climate- vulnerable, and energy-burdened;
	+ The community may consult the Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust) for technical expertise, if desired;
* The community determines the factors of importance for use in the prioritization of scoping and sourcing renewable energy projects as part of the Application, including, but not limited to: amount of renewable electricity desired from small and large projects by specific dates; electricity pricing; community energy resilience principles; job creation; and environmental benefits; and
* The community creates the final ORO Application and submits it to the OPUC.

*Step 3: Review of the Community ORO Program Application*

* Three entities review the ORO Program Application:
	+ The Energy Trust of Oregon (Energy Trust);
	+ The investor owned utility (IOU) currently providing electricity service to the community; and
	+ The OPUC.

*Step 4: Energy Trust and IOU Create an ORO Program Proposal to Submit Back to the Community*

* Energy Trust and IOU provide information on how the ORO Program Application would affect the factors of importance identified by the community, e.g. impacts on electricity rates for participating customers;
* Energy Trust and IOU solicit projects that could meet the needs outlined in the ORO Program Application; and
* Based on these factors, Energy Trust and IOU, and co-create an ORO Program Proposal to submit back to the community for consideration.

*Step 5: Review of the ORO Program Proposal*

* Four types of entities review the ORO Program Proposal:
	+ The interested community;
	+ The OPUC
	+ An independent evaluator hired by the OPUC; and
	+ Other interested intervenors.

*Step 6: Energy Trust and IOU Make Revisions to the ORO Program Proposal*

* The OPUC identifies revisions to be made to the Proposal, per the review conducted in Step 5; and
* Energy Trust and the IOU to make revisions to ORO Program Proposal and submit the Final Proposal back to the OPUC.

*Step 7: Approval and Implementation of Final ORO Program Proposal*

* The OPUC approves the final ORO Program Proposal; and
* ORO Program implementation begins for the community.

For more information or to provide feedback or suggestions, please contact:

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