

May 3, 2021

Re: Docket AR 638 on Risk-Based Wildfire Protection Plans

Attn: Lori Koho

Dear Ms. Koho,

The undersigned appreciate the opportunity to comment on staff's draft temporary rules on public safety power shutoff (PSPS) protocols and ignition reporting requirements<sup>1</sup>. Our comments cover the draft rules generally, and PSPS protocols in particular.

### General Comments

Our approach to these comments broadly applies the mandates of the Governor's Executive Order 20-04 (EO) to "prioritize actions that will help vulnerable populations and impacted communities adapt to climate change impacts."<sup>2</sup> This docket is perhaps one of the most pressing that, at its best, can mitigate climate-induced wildfire impacts on some of the more vulnerable and impacted people in the state.

We are grateful the Commission is thinking so broadly about data collection at this stage, as we believe energy system data transparency to be integral to successful implementation of the EO. We understand utilities' concerns that some of this data may be unattainable or require a significant effort to collect and report, but comprehensive data sharing may lead to better funding and resourcing in the long-term. This is especially important since, as Hood River and Wasco Counties attest, high-risk communities are grossly under-resourced to prepare for wildfires and PSPS<sup>3</sup>.

### PSPS Protocols

Per policy briefs from the Initiative for Energy Justice<sup>4</sup>, we are **cautious of over-using the term "de-energization,"** which minimizes the extent of human impacts that PSPS decisions must take into account. We encourage the transparent use of the term "power shutoff" to describe the program.

**Identification of medically vulnerable individuals**, to the extent allowed by law, **should minimize the burden on these individuals and maximize their protections**, for example, by facilitating auto-enrollment, rather than opt-in practices. Utilities could also work closely with medical practitioners, insurance companies, and government officials with already formed lists. Per Hood River and Wasco County's comments, local entities have lists that are "substantially more robust"<sup>5</sup> on who is considered medically vulnerable. On this point, we underscore Staff's comments

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<sup>1</sup> <https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HNA/ar638hna134824.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive\\_orders/eo\\_20-04.pdf](https://www.oregon.gov/gov/Documents/executive_orders/eo_20-04.pdf), p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> <https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HAC/ar638hac155546.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> <https://iejusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/V3.3-Policy-Brief-CA-Shutoffs-Data-Brief.pdf>, p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> <https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HAC/ar638hac155546.pdf>, p. 6

during the workshop on the importance of balancing immediate readiness for 2021 fire season with longer-term preparation, with the acknowledgement that decisions that protect human life must be addressed first. We believe the accurate identification and prioritization of individuals who are medically vulnerable must be one of the Commission's top priorities in consideration of any power shutoff program.

Point (1) under "Procedure Under Notification" notes that utilities must **make "every effort"** to notify their service territories about PSPS as early as possible<sup>6</sup>. We believe **one metric by which to measure whether this effort was made will be through reports from utility partners after the event**. As such, transparent relationship building between utilities and local partners, and the Commission's tracking of such relationships, will be crucial to verifying this effort.

Per our comments at the workshop, we tentatively support utilities posting PSPS reports publicly. We believe reporting requirements should also include the number of customers affected, the number of vulnerable customers, and the duration of the shutoff. Again, comprehensive reporting now, may help better allocate sorely needed funding in the long term.

We appreciate your time and deliberate consideration of such a sensitive topic, and look forward to engaging in the future.

Thank you,

Heather Moline, NW Energy Coalition

Alessandra de la Torre, Rogue Climate

Jessica Nischik-Long, MPH

Helen Kennedy, Resident of Marcola

Aaron Salzman, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon/Oregon Interfaith Power and Light

Nora Apter, Oregon Environmental Council

Rev. Richenda Fairhurst, Southwestern Chapter of The Climate Reality Project

Kasey Hovik, Umpqua Watersheds

Hogan M. Sherrow, PhD, Rural Oregon Climate Political Action Committee

Claire Richards, PhD, RN

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Jane Stackhouse, Metro Climate Action Team

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<sup>6</sup> <https://edocs.puc.state.or.us/efdocs/HNA/ar638hna134824.pdf>, p. 4.