

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
OF OREGON**

LC 83

In the Matter of

CASCADE NATURAL GAS
CORPORATION,

2023 Integrated Resource Plan.

RULING

DISPOSITION: MOTION TO ESTABLISH PROCEDURAL SCHEDULE GRANTED

On June 2, 2023, Cascade Natural Gas Corporation filed its 2023 Integrated Resource Plan (IRP). The Oregon Citizens' Utility Board filed its notice of intervention on June 8, 2023. The Alliance of Western Energy Consumers' petition to intervene was granted on June 28, 2023.

On July 13, 2023, Commission Staff filed a motion to establish a procedural schedule in this docket, noting its understanding that all parties at that time supported the proposed schedule.

Accordingly, the procedural schedule is adopted as set forth below:

Date	Event
July 25, 2023, 9:30 a.m.	Public Meeting: Company IRP Presentation (Informational Only)
July 28, 2023	Requested Deadline to File Petitions to Intervene
September 28, 2023	Staff and Stakeholder Opening Comments Due
October 26, 2023	Company Reply Comments Due
November 28, 2023, 1:30 p.m.	Commissioner Workshop
December 18, 2023	Staff Final Comments Due
February 7, 2023	Company and Stakeholder Comments on Staff's Final Comments Due
March 7, 2024, 1:30 p.m. (Tentative)	Special Public Meeting: Public Hearing and Commissioner Work Session
March 14, 2024, 1:30 p.m. (Tentative)	Special Public Meeting: Commissioner Work Session (if needed)

No prehearing conference will be held in this docket. Parties may request a conference if needed during this proceeding. The March 7 and March 14 Special Public Meetings are listed as tentative and will be confirmed at a later date. The parties should calendar those dates to ensure their availability.

All filings in this proceeding are due by 3:00 p.m. on the due date via electronic submission to the Filing Center. Filings submitted after 3:00 p.m. will be considered filed on the next business day.

This proceeding is not a contested case under ORS 183.310(2) and will be conducted under the process set forth in OAR 860-027-0400. Persons need not intervene as a party to participate in this proceeding and may attend workshops, submit written comments, and provide oral comments to the Commission at public comment meetings. Persons may seek party status, however, for the limited purpose of obtaining access to confidential information pursuant to the terms of a protective order. Party status in this proceeding, however, does not confer the general rights and duties as those of parties in contested case proceedings. I request that petitions to intervene be filed by July 28, 2023, although they are not required to be filed by that date.¹

Cascade Natural Gas Corporation will make its initial IRP presentation during an information only portion of the Commission's regular public meeting on July 25, 2023, at 9:30 a.m. This presentation is the first step in the Commission's review of Cascade's IRP in this docket.

For those new to IRPs and the Commission, Attachment A to this ruling is an "Introduction to IRPs." As described there, the first step in the Commission's review of an IRP generally is a presentation of the plan by the utility. Public comment is held for later in the process after further review and analysis of the plan.

On occasion, however, the Commission allows brief public comments immediately following the utility's initial presentation of the IRP. We reserve this for instances in which there has been significant public engagement in the IRP development workshops or heightened public awareness of the IRP.

At the July 25 public meeting, the Commission may invite public comment immediately following Cascade's presentation. Given the early stage of the Commission's review process, we ask that public comments be brief and focus on describing what issues the commenter believes are most important for the Commission to evaluate during the process, rather than advocating for a particular outcome in the Commission's acknowledgment decision.

¹ OAR 860-001-0300(2).

The agenda for Cascade's IRP presentation is as follows:

Process review (Chair Decker, ALJ Mellgren)

IRP Presentation (Cascade Natural Gas, with Commissioner questions)

Public Comment

Dated this 21st day of July, 2023, at Salem, Oregon.



John Mellgren
Administrative Law Judge

ATTACHMENT: Introduction to IRPs

INTRODUCTION TO IRPs

An Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is a utility's plan to meet the future energy needs of its customers, in compliance with any policy requirements for energy resource supply. Every two to three years, a utility is required to engage with stakeholders to develop and present to the Commission with its plan and any near-term actions needed to carry it out. After considering all comments and perspectives, the Commission decides whether to "acknowledge" the plan and actions.

"Acknowledgment" is a regulatory concept: if a plan and associated actions are acknowledged, then there is a stronger presumption that the cost of taking those actions can be recovered in utility rates that the Commission sets in a future rate case. In a future rate case, the utility still must prove that its actions were reasonable, prudent and in the public interest. Both IRP acknowledgment and rate case decisions are related to whether the utility may recover costs associated with its actions; neither decision generally prohibits any particular utility action related to the utility's acquisition of particular resources.

The Commission has adopted official rules and guidelines for IRPs. Under those rules, the Commission's core inquiry in considering acknowledgement of an IRP is whether the utility's plan represents a reasonable "least cost, least risk" strategy for meeting its customers' needs, along with any policy requirements for energy resource supply. The Commission plans to update its IRP rules through future processes to reflect today's policy context regarding utility resources more directly, including decarbonization requirements placed on the utilities.

The PUC's process for IRP review generally follows these steps, not always in order:

- The utility presents its plan at a Commission public meeting;
- Staff and intervenors conduct discovery (a formal process of seeking information from the utility about its plan);
- Staff, intervenors, and the utility file a series of written comments on the plan;
- The Commission holds one or more workshops to gain greater insight into issues raised in written comments;
- The Commission holds one or more public hearings to gather comments on whether to acknowledge the plan and actions;
- The three Commissioners deliberate, in an open public meeting, on the issues presented and reach their decision;
- The Administrative Hearings Division works with the Commissioners to prepare a written order.

Anyone interested in an IRP may participate in the PUC process, which is organized under a "docket number" beginning with "LC." Participation options include:

1. Sharing your views live at a public hearing or by submitting a public comment in writing.

2. Signing up to be notified by email when filings are made, or orders issued in the docket.
3. Intervening in the docket and filing comments according to the established schedule. (This creates a more official "intervenor" status that enables participation in discovery, sharing of confidential information and facilitates participation in workshops.)