

BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION

OF OREGON

UE 180

In the Matter of)
)
)
PORTLAND GENERAL ELECTRIC,)
)
Request for a General Rate Revision.)

)

**DIRECT TESTIMONY ON POWER COSTS
OF THE
CITIZENS' UTILITY BOARD OF OREGON**

July 18, 2006



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1 Our names are Bob Jenks and Lowrey Brown, and our qualifications are listed in
2 CUB Exhibits 101 and 102 respectively.

3 **I. Introduction**

4 CUB addresses three issues in this testimony: 1) PGE's proposal to include all or
5 some of the 2005-06 Boardman outage in the plant's forced outage rate; 2) The use, for
6 rate-setting purposes, of market purchases in Monet to serve load that will actually be
7 served by Port Westward; and 3) Monet's failure to capture the extrinsic value of PGE's
8 capacity resources.

9 **II. Forced Outage Rate**

10 In its filing, PGE proposes to use a 4-year rolling average to forecast the forced
11 outage rate for its thermal units. However, the Company fails to remove last year's
12 Boardman outage from this average. There are two problems with this. First, the
13 2005-06 Boardman outage was an extraordinary event, precisely the kind of event that is

1 normalized out when forecasting a future test year. Second, the Company currently has a
2 deferral docket open to seek recovery for this outage, so including it in the forced outage
3 rate could allow the Company to recover its share of the outage costs from customers
4 twice.

5 **A. What PGE Is Asking For**

6 In PGE's deferral filing for the Boardman outage, the Company asks the
7 Commission to grant it full recovery – with no deadband or sharing of any kind – for
8 costs incurred during the deferral period (net of savings from the foregone spring 2006
9 outage).¹ On top of this, the Company also proposes including whatever portion of the
10 Boardman outage for which it does not receive recovery in its 4-year rolling average of
11 forced outages.² PGE is essentially saying to the Commission that if the Company
12 doesn't get what it considers to be adequate recovery in its Boardman deferral, then it
13 shall put the costs of the Boardman outage in its forced outage rate instead.

14 **B. Reality Check – Of Deferrals & Deadbands**

15 Where has the Company been over the past decade? The Commission has a solid
16 history of using a deadband for power cost deferrals: dockets UM 995 for PacifiCorp,
17 UM 1007 for Idaho Power, and UM 1008/1009 for PGE. The Commission's Order in
18 UM 1071, PGE's application for deferral of hydro replacement costs, states:

19 In UM 995, for instance, we established a deadband around PacifiCorp's
20 baseline of 250 basis points of return on equity. We allowed no recovery
21 of costs or refunds to customers within that deadband, reasoning that the
22 band represented risks assumed, or rewards gained, in the course of the
23 utility business.

24 OPUC Order No. 04-108, page 9.

¹ UM 1234 PGE/100/Lesh/1.

² UE 180 PGE/400/Lesh-Niman/5.

1 Though UE 165 specifically addressed a power cost adjustment mechanism, the
2 Commission’s Order No. 05-1261 discusses deferrals as well. In describing what type of
3 event qualifies for deferred accounting, the Commission writes:

4 To determine whether an event is extraordinary and has substantial
5 financial impact, the Commission has, in prior cases, examined whether
6 the event impacted the utility’s earnings beyond a reasonable range within
7 which the utility should bear the entire cost or benefit of variability.

8 OPUC Order No. 05-1261, page 9.

9 Clearly, the Commission’s discussions of deferrals are not questioning whether
10 the utility should absorb a share of the costs of such an event. The Commission’s
11 discussions solely explore how much of the costs should properly be absorbed by the
12 utility “in the course of the utility business.” In proposing that its deferral for Boardman
13 outage costs should have no deadband, PGE effectively thumbs its nose at the
14 Commission, Staff, and the parties, all of whom have spent an inordinate amount of time
15 working on the issues of deferrals and power cost adjustments.

16 **C. Pick – One Or The Other, But Not Both**

17 Deferrals serve one purpose, while the forced outage rate serves another.
18 Deferrals provide recovery for exceptional events, while rolling averages account for
19 normal variation that is part and parcel of forecasting a future test year. Deferrals have
20 regulatory lag as well as a deadband and sharing bands to distribute the cost of non-
21 recurring events between customers and shareholders. The use of a rolling average
22 presumes that, in any given year, normal outages will cost more or less than the average,
23 but, over time, the financial impact should balance between customers and shareholders.

24 The Company has made clear that it considers the 2005 Boardman outage to be an
25 exceptional event:

1 This is particularly true for such a major outage as the one causing the
2 deferral application. A forced outage of this length is very rare for
3 Boardman ... and rare for the industry overall.

4 UM 1234 PGE/100/Lesh/5.

5 Data provided by the North American Electric Reliability Council
6 demonstrates that the 105 day length of the initial Boardman outage is
7 extremely rare.

8 UM 1234 PGE/300/Drennan-Tinker-Hager/4.

9 Certainly, PGE's application for a deferral suggests the Company thinks the
10 Boardman outage is an exceptional event, and, thereby, appropriate for deferral, and the
11 Company also emphasizes the extreme nature of the event in its deferral testimony. Why
12 then has the Company also included the Boardman outage in its forced outage rate?

13 **D. Using A Deferral For The Boardman Outage**

14 There are a number of reasons to use a deferral to address PGE's Boardman
15 outage. Primarily, as explained above, the magnitude of the outage moves the event
16 outside of the range of normal variation, and such an event should not be forecast for a
17 future test year. As stated earlier, deferrals are for one-time events, and the financial
18 impact of such an event will not, therefore, balance over time between customers and
19 shareholders.

20 The lag between the beginning of the event and the deferral filing, as well as a
21 deadband and appropriate sharing bands, serve to share the cost of an event between
22 customers and the Company. Including the pre-deferral period – or any other undefined
23 percentage of the Boardman outage – in the Company's forced outage rate, removes the
24 appropriate cost sharing for this event. When the Commission grants what it considers to
25 be appropriate recovery for an event in a deferral, that's it. The Commission has

1 evaluated what it considers to be reasonable recovery for that event, and the Company
2 cannot then turn around and charge customers for that event in a forced outage rate.

3 **E. Forced Outage Rate Is Not The Appropriate Place For Boardman Recovery**

4 The use of a forced outage rate is to capture the normal variation of plant
5 availability. A forced outage rate should not be used for recovery of costs from an
6 exceptional one-time outage.

7 *i. The Boardman Outage Should Not Be Forecast As A Normal Event*

8 This is not a perfect world and generating units are not available 100% of the
9 time. We can look to past plant performance to get a sense of what a reasonable
10 expectation for outages is, and it is appropriate to factor this into a future test year.
11 However, there is no reason to believe that Boardman, or any other plant for that matter,
12 will be off-line for the length of time that Boardman was during the 2005-06 outage.
13 PGE itself calls this event “extremely rare,” and “extremely rare” events are not forecast
14 for ratemaking purposes. The catastrophic outage of 2005-06 is not likely to repeat itself
15 and, as such, should not be forecast to repeat itself. By including the 2005-06 Boardman
16 outage in the plant’s 4-year average for its forced outage rate, Boardman’s availability
17 forecast would presume an event such as this once every four years, and this is extremely
18 unlikely.

19 *ii. Forced Outage Rate Is A Less Precise Method Of Cost Recovery*

20 By including the 2005-06 Boardman outage in its forced outage rate, PGE
21 proposes to recover the costs of the event in future rates through lower forecasts in the
22 plant’s availability. Never mind that the Company already has a deferral in place to
23 address the cost of the Boardman outage. Through the forced outage rate, the Company

1 would recover approximately a quarter of the cost of the outage each year for the next
2 four years until the outage dropped off the end of the 4-year rolling average.

3 If the Commission were for some reason to decide the Company should get full
4 recovery of the Boardman costs over four years, then it could amortize 100% of the
5 Boardman replacement power costs over four years through UM 1234, PGE's deferral.
6 Using the forced outage rate as a cost recovery mechanism for a specific event, instead of
7 as an expected outage level forecast, is poor policy. As a cost recovery mechanism, the
8 forced outage rate cannot be fair, because the recovery amount will depend on future
9 power prices, and so be higher or lower than the actual outage cost.

10 For example, if the cost of replacing Boardman power averaged \$50/MWh, but
11 the forward price curve used in the next four power cost updates averaged \$75/MWh, the
12 Company would recover 150% of its actual costs in real terms. The opposite is also true.
13 If the average cost per MWh over the next four years were less than \$50, the Company
14 would under-recover the actual costs.

15 A much better way to deal with cost recovery of an exceptional, one-time forced
16 outage is through deferred accounting. This allows the Commission to consider the
17 appropriate level of recovery, and authorize that recovery. By using a deferral, cost
18 recovery is determined by regulatory oversight, rather than being left to the variability of
19 the wholesale market.

20 ***iii. Cannot Perform Prudence Review Through Forced Outage Rate***

21 Another reason that the forced outage rate is an inappropriate tool for the
22 Boardman outage is that it circumvents any kind of prudence review. As PGE has
23 pointed out, the 2005-06 Boardman outage is a rare event, and the Company's role both

1 in the events leading up to the outage and the events addressing the outage need to be
2 reviewed by the Commission. This is an important step before customers should be
3 asked to pay any of the costs associated with the outage.

4 We have not yet seen the root cause analysis, and have no idea if the outage was
5 caused by poor maintenance, a design flaw, or simple bad luck. Costs associated with the
6 Boardman outage should not be amortized until the prudence review is complete;
7 otherwise, customers may be charged for an outage for which the Company or the turbine
8 manufacturer is liable. By including the Boardman outage in its forced outage rate, PGE
9 can short-cut the prudence review process, and charge customers before the Commission,
10 Staff, or intervenors have had a chance to evaluate whether the costs should be
11 recoverable in the first place. Without such analysis, cost recovery is inappropriate.

12 **F. CUB Recommendation On PGE's Forced Outage Rate**

13 The Commission should exclude 2005 from Boardman's forced outage rate, and
14 use instead either a 3-year average 2002 through 2004, or a 4-year average from 2001
15 through 2004. Regardless, 2005 contains an event that cannot reasonably be forecast for
16 2007, and should not be included in the Company's Boardman forced outage rate.

17 **III. Phantom Open Position – Monet & Partial Year Of Port Westward**

18 PGE proposes that rates for January and February 2007 be based on a Monet run
19 without Port Westward. Monet would meet the load that would have been served by Port
20 Westward (from March through December) with spot market purchases. The inherent
21 assumption in this methodology is that the Company would leave a large open position,
22 through the non-existence of Port Westward, and simply fill it with spot market
23 purchases. The problem with this is that costs from the RVM are annualized, so the

1 impact of Monet market purchases in March through December would impact the rates
2 charged to customers in January and February rates.

3 This is further complicated by the fact that the cost of this phantom open position,
4 and thereby the cost to customers in January and February, will not be known until after
5 the Commission decision in this case when the Company updates its final Monet run. It
6 is not hard to imagine circumstances, such as a serious hurricane season that impacts gas
7 and power prices, which could affect the forward price curves this fall. The increased
8 forward price curves would raise the cost of the phantom open position (March through
9 December) which in turn would increase the rates charged to customers in January and
10 February, because the cost of the open position is annualized in the RVM.

11 It is unrealistic for the Company to have such a large, unmanaged capacity left to
12 the vagaries of the market. When Boardman went down, PGE purchased replacement
13 power for the period the plant was expected to be down.³ The Company recognizes that
14 an open position creates risk, and actively manages them whenever possible. In the
15 Company's proposal, customers would take the significant risk of the large, unmanaged
16 open position in the Monet model, when that open position is not expected to exist in
17 reality.

18 Port Westward is a large generating plant, and the capacity of the plant is modeled
19 three different ways for this case:

20 A. January-February: Managed Pre-Port Westward Period. This represents the
21 period of January and February, when Port Westward will not be operational, and the
22 Company is actively managing its open position that will later be filled by Port
23 Westward.

³ UM 1234 PGE/200/Quennoz-Mayer/6.

1 B. March-December: Managed Post-Port Westward Period. Beginning in March,
2 the Company will manage the capacity of the plant through its management of gas costs.
3 Port Westward is expected to reduce the Company's net power cost. The variable costs
4 of fuel and purchased power when Port Westward is running are expected to be
5 \$12 million less than they would have been without Port Westward.⁴ Otherwise, Port
6 Westward would not be prudent. This means that this cost is expected to be less than it
7 would have been in the pre-Port Westward period.

8 C. March-December: Unmanaged Post-Port Westward Period. This is the
9 phantom period, when the Company expects Port Westward to be up and running, but,
10 for modeling purposes, the Company assumes Port Westward does not exist, and replaces
11 the plant's expected output with market purchases priced at the forward price curve.
12 While it can be assumed that this will be more costly than the managed post-Port
13 Westward position (otherwise Monet would not dispatch Port Westward), we cannot
14 know how much more costly until after the case is over, the Commission has issued its
15 Order, and PGE releases its final Monet run.

16 The actual expected power cost for 2007 is the sum of Period A and Period B, and
17 rates after March will be based on the sum of Period A and Period B. However, customer
18 rates in January and February will be based on the sum of Period A and Period C. As
19 costs in Period C are greater than in Period B, rates are being set at a rate that is higher
20 than actual expected costs. The direction of this cost difference is clear, customers can
21 only be over-charged, because, in Period B, if Port Westward is out of the money, it
22 simply won't be run. How significant the cost difference is, however, will not be clear
23 until after the case is decided.

⁴ UE 180 PGE/300/Quennoz-Schue/36.

1 CUB proposes that the Company do one of two things to fix this:

2 First, PGE could simply use the sum of Period A and Period B, which is the
3 closest to the expected actual variable cost. This method leaves the risk of Port
4 Westward being delayed with the Company, where it should be. It is also the method
5 PacifiCorp agreed to in UE 170, after CUB made a similar criticism of PacifiCorp's
6 TAM proposal.

7 Q. Does the Company's willingness to adopt Mr. Galbraith's
8 recommendation to include variable costs associated with new
9 resources in the RVM update address CUB's "phantom costs"
10 argument?

11 A. Yes, subject to the limitations of Oregon's used and useful statute.
12 Incorporating variable costs associated with new resources will ensure
13 customers' rates are based on all used and useful plant, and will
14 eliminate reliance on the proxy market purchases, to which CUB was
15 strongly opposed.

16 UE 170 PPL/702/Omohundro/3.

17 Another option is for the Company to remove from its Period C Monet run, an
18 amount of load equal to the expected output of Port Westward. PGE's filing removes the
19 supply associated with Port Westward, but leaves the load expected to be served by Port
20 Westward. Removing the load in addition to the supply, would remove the full impact of
21 Port Westward from the rates that will be in effect in January and February.

22 **IV. Extrinsic Value**

23 PGE's Monet model fails to recognize the extrinsic value of capacity resources,
24 such as gas-fired generation plants and capacity contracts. Customers pay the fixed costs
25 of such resources, but these plants and contracts are often dispatched to the market when
26 conditions vary from what was forecast, and so the value of capacity resources is not
27 captured by Monet. Under these circumstances, the benefits go solely to shareholders.

1 Monet does not fully utilize capacity resources, because it is variations from
2 forecast conditions that change the spread between gas and electric prices such that these
3 plants and contracts become economic. Under varied conditions, the Company may
4 dispatch its capacity resources to serve load or to make profitable market sales, but, in
5 either case, it is the shareholders who benefit. Capacity resources both mitigate cost
6 increases (thus protecting shareholders from power cost increases they are paid a return
7 to absorb),⁵ and produce revenues from off-system sales (thus giving extra profits to
8 shareholders). The versatility of capacity resources, resources paid for by customers,
9 provides significant value that is not captured by Monet.

10 Staff, ICNU, and CUB testified to this issue both in PacifiCorp's annual power
11 cost update for 2007,⁶ and in regard to capacity contracts included in PGE's 2006 RVM.⁷
12 In its 2006 RVM, PGE proposed that the fixed costs associated with capacity contracts
13 should be paid by customers, even though, under normalized ratemaking, there is no
14 benefit to customers from the contracts. Only non-normalized events dispatch these
15 capacity contracts. Non-normalized costs and benefits are the utility's to absorb.
16 Allowing a utility to charge customers 100% of the cost of capacity contracts and the
17 fixed cost of generating units used significantly for capacity generation – all of which
18 primarily serve to reduce non-normalized costs and generate sales revenue for the benefit
19 of the Company – violates basic ratemaking principles. It is little more than customers
20 paying the premium for insurance that protects and benefits shareholders.

⁵ When power costs are materially higher than forecast, a utility may file a deferral to share some of those costs with customers.

⁶ UE 179 CUB/100/Jenks/6-8, Staff/100/Wordley/9-17, & ICNU/100/Falkenberg/43-48.

⁷ UE 172 CUB/100/Jenks/7-9, Staff/100/Galbraith/4-6, & ICNU/100/Falkenberg/11-15.

1 There are two ways to adjust for the extrinsic value of PGE's capacity resources.
2 The Commission could impute revenue to account for the additional revenue that the
3 units can be expected to produce. Alternatively, the Commission could reduce the share
4 of the fixed costs charged to ratepayers in order to represent the share of the fixed costs
5 associated with normalized usage. CUB is not recommending a specific adjustment to
6 account for the extrinsic value of PGE's capacity resources, as we anticipate that other
7 parties will do so. We urge the Commission to consider those proposals, and adopt an
8 adjustment to account for the extrinsic value of PGE's capacity resources.

9 **V. Conclusion**

10 CUB recommends that the Commission:

- 11 • Exclude 2005 from Boardman's forced outage rate, and use instead either a
12 3-year average 2002 through 2004, or a 4-year average from 2001 through
13 2004;
- 14 • Adjust PGE's Monet forecast by either removing load equal to the expected
15 output of Port Westward or, for the purpose of forecasting power costs,
16 including Port Westward to come online as scheduled; and
- 17 • Adopt an adjustment to account for the extrinsic value of PGE's capacity
18 resources.

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EXPERIENCE: Provided testimony or comments in a variety of OPUC dockets, including UE 88, UE 92, UM 903, UM 918, UE 102, UP 168, UT 125, UT 141, UE 115, UE 116, UE 137, UE 139, UE 161, UE 165, UE 167, UE 170, UE 172, UE 173, UG 152, UM 995, UM 1050, UM 1071, UM 1147, UM 1121, UM 1206, and UM 1209. Participated in the development of a variety of Least Cost Plans and PUC Settlement Conferences. Provided testimony to Oregon Legislative Committees on consumer issues relating to energy and telecommunications. Lobbied the Oregon Congressional delegation on behalf of CUB and the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates.

Between 1982 and 1991, worked for the Oregon State Public Interest Research Group, the Massachusetts Public Interest Research Group, and the Fund for Public Interest Research on a variety of public policy issues.

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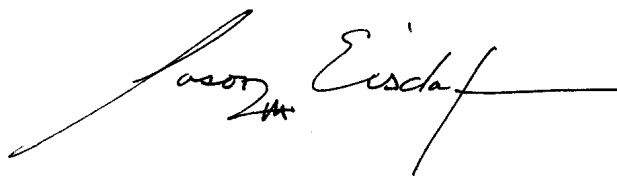
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Prior to this, worked as a consultant with KEMA-Xenergy in Portland from 2002 to 2003 on energy and energy efficiency issues. Between 1997 and 2001, freelanced in Colorado for The Valley Journal, Solar Energy International, Energy Systems Engineering, and Resource Engineering providing writing and technical assistance.

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that on this 18th day of July, 2006, I served the foregoing Testimony on Power Costs of the Citizens' Utility Board of Oregon in docket UE 180 upon each party listed below, by email and U.S. mail, postage prepaid, and upon the Commission by email and by sending 6 copies by U.S. mail, postage prepaid, to the Commission's Salem offices.

Respectfully submitted,



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W=Waive Paper service, Q=Confidential

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