

RENEWABLE NORTHWEST PROJECT

UM 1610

RESPONSE TESTIMONY OF

JIMMY LINDSAY

In the Matter of

PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION OF OREGON

Staff Investigation Into Qualifying Facility Contracting and Pricing

March 18, 2013

1 **INTRODUCTION**

2 **Q. Please state your name, occupation, and business address.**

3 A. My name is Jimmy Lindsay. I am employed as Power Systems Analyst at
4 Renewable Northwest Project ("RNP"). My business address is 421 SW Oak
5 Street, Suite 1125, Portland, OR 97204.

6 **Q. Please describe your educational background and work experience.**

7 A. I hold a Bachelor's degree in Physics and a Bachelor's degree in History from
8 Bowdoin College. I received a Fulbright Scholarship to study distributed
9 generation with the Department of Energy Technology at The Royal Institute of
10 Technology in Stockholm, Sweden. I have a pending MSc in Sustainable Energy
11 Engineering from The Royal Institute of Technology. Since returning from
12 Sweden in January 2011, I have worked at RNP as a utility analyst.

13 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony?**

14 A. My testimony has three parts. First, I explain several general policy reasons why
15 the Oregon Public Utility Commission ("Commission") should retain the core
16 features of its current approach to implementing the Public Utilities Regulatory
17 Policy Act of 1978 ("PURPA"), particularly the 10 MW published rate/standard
18 contract threshold. Second, I address the 10 MW threshold and considerations
19 for preventing aggregated groups of projects from receiving published rates
20 intended for independent 10 MW projects. Third, I address utility-proposed cost
21 adjustments for integration of variable energy resources.

22 **Q. Are your opinions in this case limited to a narrow range of issues?**

23

1 A. No. My views, and RNP's views more broadly, extend to many of the other
2 issues in the docket. However, these views are likely to align closely with those
3 of other intervenors. Rather than submit overlapping testimony, I have focused
4 on two key themes. My testimony addresses Issue 4A (integration) because
5 integration is a particular focus of my professional attention and expertise. My
6 testimony addresses Issues 5A-C, relating to the standard rate/contract eligibility
7 threshold, for several reasons: (1) retaining the 10 MW threshold is important to
8 Oregon's PURPA implementation continuing to include all competitive renewable
9 resource types, including community scale wind resources; (2) because limiting
10 published rates to single 10 MW projects is key to the integrity of published rates
11 as a policy tool; and (3) because rollback of Oregon's published rate thresholds
12 would send a negative message about the state's intention to encourage
13 renewable resources.

14 **Q. What do you recommend with respect to integration costs?**

15 A. First, because wind integration cost studies are not an appropriate proxy for
16 determining the cost of integrating solar photovoltaic resources, I recommend
17 that the Commission decline to adjust avoided cost rates for integration of solar
18 photovoltaic qualifying facilities ("QFs") until solar penetration motivates utilities
19 to study solar integration costs. Second, I recommend that, if the Commission
20 chooses to reduce avoided cost rates for standard wind QFs to reflect integration
21 costs, it should identify an improved practice for scrutinizing integration studies.

22 **GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF OREGON'S PURPA IMPLEMENTATION**

23 **Q. What should be the policy goal of implementing PURPA?**

1 A. The Commission should implement PURPA to encourage competition among
2 resources with diverse characteristics in meeting utilities' generation needs. The
3 Commission should retain the goal it stated in Order No. 05-584: to encourage
4 the economically efficient development of QFs insofar as possible, while ensuring
5 that rates match the utility's avoided cost.

6 **Q. Has the Legislature directed the Commission to encourage development of
7 renewable QFs?**

8 A. Yes. The Oregon Legislature views "community-based renewable energy
9 projects . . . [as] an essential element of Oregon's energy future." ORS 469A.210
10 sets forth a goal that at least eight percent of retail load by 2025 come from
11 "small-scale renewable energy projects with a generating capacity of 20
12 megawatts or less." The statute directs "[a]ll agencies . . . [to] establish policies
13 and procedures promoting the goal declared in this section."

14 **Q. Has the Commission promoted that goal to date?**

15 A. Yes. The Commission has committed significant attention to PURPA
16 implementation in the last decade, and has settled many of the core elements of
17 PURPA implementation in a balanced and reasonable manner. UM 1129
18 produced a 60-page order in 2005 and a 68-page order in 2006. In UM 1396, the
19 Commission tackled details of resource sufficiency, producing orders in 2010 and
20 2011.

21 **Q. What elements have been most significant in encouraging balanced
22 renewable QF development?**

23

1 A. The most significant factors for encouraging diverse QF resource additions are
2 contract length of at least 20 years, published rates and standard contract
3 availability up to 10 megawatts, and certainty and notice around rate changes.
4 The most significant factors for avoiding excess QF development, relative to
5 utility resource needs, are sufficiency/deficiency pricing and preventing
6 developers from aggregating QFs into large, utility-scale developments. Working
7 together, these key features of Oregon's implementation have produced diverse
8 QF resource additions without overwhelming utility generating portfolios.

9 **Q. How should the Commission approach this docket?**

10 A. The Commission should view this docket as an opportunity to refine certain
11 peripheral mechanics of its PURPA implementation and to address some new
12 issues that have arisen. The Commission need not revisit central tenets of its
13 PURPA implementation policy. Certainly, the Commission should reject the
14 utilities' invitations to dismantle the system created in UM 1129 and UM 1396. In
15 particular, reducing the published rate threshold would set a damaging precedent
16 and fundamentally change PURPA's function of creating a target market for
17 competitive community-scale resources in Oregon.

18 **ELIGIBILITY THRESHOLD AND SINGLE PROJECT DETERMINATION**

19 **Q. Should the 10 MW standard contract threshold be retained?**

20 A. Yes. The utilities argue for reducing the standard contract threshold for several
21 reasons: developer sophistication and project costs, mismatch with project-
22 specific avoided cost, and prevention of "disaggregation." The first two reasons
23 were presented in UM 1129, when the Commission established the 10 MW

1 threshold, and are unlikely to have changed significantly. Potential for
2 “disaggregation” was the *sole* reason given by the Idaho Public Utilities
3 Commission (“IPUC”) for reducing the published rate threshold for wind and solar
4 resources, yet the IPUC could have used a narrower regulatory approach.

5 **Q. Do you agree that it is important to prevent projects larger than the
6 published rate size threshold from obtaining the published rate?**

7 A. Yes. If larger projects with greater economies of scale are allowed to access
8 published rates, the integrity of published avoided cost rates as a tool to level the
9 playing field for smaller projects may be called into question. In Idaho, where
10 there was effectively no mechanism for regulating the practice of combining
11 several QFs into an aggregated development (and, importantly, where the
12 published rate threshold was much higher than Oregon’s and rates were not
13 calibrated to resource sufficiency/deficiency), PURPA resource additions in Idaho
14 Power’s service territory added up quickly. The IPUC cited the potential for
15 “disaggregation” as its sole reason for dramatically reducing the published rate
16 threshold for wind and solar QFs, from 10 aMW to 100 kW. The unchecked
17 practice of disaggregation and the extreme response by the IPUC demonstrate
18 the importance of adopting a regulatory mechanism to prevent widespread
19 access to the PURPA published rate by large aggregations of closely related
20 projects.

21 **Q. Must Oregon reduce its PURPA published rate threshold in order to
22 prevent widespread “disaggregation”?**

23

1 A. No. Reducing the threshold, particularly to 100 kW, is a disproportionate,
2 unnecessarily damaging policy response. A thoughtful regulatory approach to
3 distinguishing single projects from aggregated projects is the right way to
4 accomplish the objective. The 10 MW published rate threshold is significant to
5 accomplishing the Commission's policy goals; it should not be abandoned where
6 other means of preventing widespread "disaggregation" exist.

7 **Q. Do you recommend that the Commission formally adopt the Oregon**
8 **"partial stipulation" approach for identifying single projects?**

9 A. The Oregon "partial stipulation" approach to single project identification, in
10 combination with other elements of Oregon's PURPA implementation, has
11 effectively prevented widespread disaggregation. There is a significant difference
12 between one or two arguably "disaggregated" projects in Oregon, and the regular
13 practice of project combination in Idaho. Even so, I recommend that the
14 Commission further tighten its single project criteria to prevent additional
15 instances of disaggregation and still preserve the benefits of published rates and
16 standard contracts for community-scale projects.

17 **Q. What is the most important thing for single project criteria to discern in the**
18 **PURPA context?**

19 A. In the PURPA context, the primary function of the size threshold is to preserve
20 published rates for projects that do not enjoy significant economies of scale (and,
21 as such, are less able to absorb the transaction costs of negotiation). The goal of
22 single project criteria in the PURPA context should be to reveal economic
23 interdependence. Thus, the most important characteristics will be financial in

1 nature—for example, beneficial ownership, financing, cost and revenue sharing,
2 combined purchases of generating equipment, and combined construction
3 contracts.

4 **Q. Is a distance criterion also necessary?**

5 A. Distance between projects is not necessarily indicative of economic
6 interdependence. Projects very near one another may be unrelated, while
7 projects 5.1 miles apart may share significant financial details. A distance
8 criterion, however, seems unavoidable as a threshold indicator of when to
9 examine the relatedness of two projects. A distance threshold creates some
10 objectivity and predictability for all involved. I recommend that the Commission
11 retain the five-mile distance criterion from the partial stipulation, but reserve the
12 ability to review and apply financial criteria for more widely spaced projects—
13 perhaps up to 10 miles—where a greater than usual number of characteristics
14 suggest economic interdependence.

15 **Q. Are there criteria to be avoided in distinguishing single projects?**

16 A. A method for distinguishing single projects should not discourage development
17 behaviors that other important policies would encourage. For example, local
18 residents and natural resource agencies may appreciate projects sharing
19 infrastructure and related facilities in order to reduce land impacts. Shared
20 facilities among separate projects should continue to be encouraged as a method
21 of improving the efficiency of the power system. Also, single project criteria
22 should not punish unavoidable similarities across unrelated projects, such as
23 relationships with the same operations and maintenance providers, scheduling or

1 forecasting providers, or renewable energy credit brokers. There are few third
2 party companies providing those services, and all independent QFs will need to
3 contract with some third party to perform some or all of those functions.

4 **INTEGRATION COST ADJUSTMENTS TO QF RATES – SOLAR**

5 **Q. Have the utilities performed solar integration cost studies as the**
6 **foundation for adjusting solar QF rates?**

7 A. No. The utilities have proposed to adjust the avoided cost rates for solar QFs
8 based on the balancing reserve need and cost assumptions from their wind
9 integration studies.

10 **Q. Are wind integration costs predictive of solar integration costs?**

11 A. No. Solar is an entirely different resource with unique integration requirements.
12 Wind integration costs do not accurately reflect the utility cost of solar integration.

13 **Q. How do solar integration requirements differ from wind integration**
14 **requirements?**

15 A. Integrating solar generation generally requires less balancing reserves than wind
16 generation for four reasons. (1) Solar generation benefits from more accurate
17 generation forecasting than wind generation. (2) Solar generation variability
18 experiences more smoothing due to geographic diversity than occurs for wind
19 facilities. (3) Solar generation is less time correlated than incremental wind
20 generation with existing variable generators. (4) Solar resources only generate
21 during daylight hours. These four factors contribute to solar's reduced integration
22 need relative to wind generation.

23

1 **Q. Does Bonneville Power Administration (“BPA”) charge wind integration**
2 **rates for solar generators?**

3 A. No. BPA’s initial proposal for the FY14-15 rate case does not charge solar
4 generators the wind integration rate. BPA staff used real solar generation data
5 (albeit from only one project) and, by applying the same methodology used to
6 calculate the wind integration rate, determined that the solar integration rate was
7 18% of the wind integration rate.

8 **Q. Do solar QFs presently impose measurable integration costs?**

9 A. No. Few solar QFs exist on the systems of the utilities represented in this docket.
10 Until these utilities acquire solar generation and forecast data, it is impossible to
11 know how solar forecast errors will correlate with existing system forecast errors.
12 Without this data, utilities cannot accurately estimate solar integration costs.

13 **Q. Should avoided cost rates for solar QFs be adjusted for integration costs at**
14 **this time?**

15 A. No. Until solar development motivates utilities to perform solar integration cost
16 studies, it is premature to introduce an integration adjustment into the avoided
17 cost calculation for solar QFs.

18 **INTEGRATION COST ADJUSTMENTS TO QF RATES – WIND STUDIES**

19 **Q. Have the utilities measured wind integration costs as the foundation for**
20 **proposing rate adjustments for wind QFs?**

21 A. Yes. The three utilities have developed wind integration studies as a part of their
22 Integrated Resource Plan (“IRP”) processes.

23

1 **Q. Are the wind integration studies designed to measure the cost of wind**
2 **integration for wind QFs specifically?**

3 A. No. The IRP wind integration studies determine the balancing reserve
4 requirements for the utilities' entire wind fleets, not simply for QF wind projects.
5 For PacifiCorp and PGE, the vast majority of the wind fleet's capacity consists of
6 very large, utility-scale wind projects. After calculating the balancing reserve
7 requirements for the entire wind fleet, the studies calculate the average cost of
8 providing those balancing reserves.

9 **Q. Are gas and market prices a significant variable in determining wind**
10 **integration costs?**

11 A. Yes. In IRP wind integration studies, the costs associated with using balancing
12 reserves for integration generally are calculated using a test year in which gas
13 and market prices are consistent with the forward price curves assumed for the
14 accompanying IRP. The assumed gas and market prices are a major variable in
15 the resulting wind integration costs.

16 **Q. Are there reasons other than changing gas and market prices why wind**
17 **integration costs may change substantially from study to study?**

18 A. Yes. Wind integration study methodology has changed dramatically from study to
19 study often resulting in large changes to the calculated reserve requirements and
20 resulting wind integration cost estimates. (For example, PacifiCorp's change from
21 use of synthetic wind data to use of real wind data improved the company's 2013
22 study methodology considerably.) Furthermore, as market conditions evolve,
23 there will be continued changes in the appropriate study assumptions regarding

1 scheduling periods, imbalance market opportunities, operational improvements in
2 the power system, wind penetration and diversity assumptions, and the portfolio
3 of available balancing resources. Substantial revisions to integration costs will
4 continue as utilities are able to rely on an expanding suite of tools to lower wind
5 integration costs.

6 **Q. Are you aware of any regulatory mandate that utilities update their wind
7 integration studies with every IRP?**

8 A. In the past several years, general utility practice has been to update wind
9 integration studies in the beginning of each IRP cycle, but I am not aware of a
10 specific regulatory requirement to do so.

11 **Q. Do IRP wind integration studies provide an adequate foundation for
12 establishing integration adjustments to PURPA avoided cost rates?**

13 A. Two significant procedural improvements are needed before the Commission
14 could reasonably rely on IRP wind integration studies as a foundation for
15 integration adjustments to PURPA avoided cost rates: (1) Regular, consistent
16 updates to ensure both that gas and market prices are consistent with
17 assumptions used to generate avoided cost rates and that study methodologies
18 and assumptions are current; and (2) a more rigorous standard of review for wind
19 integration studies and a forum for Commission approval of their specific results.

20 **Q. How frequently should utilities update wind integration cost studies to
21 support adjustments to PURPA rates?**

22 A. The Commission should require utilities to update wind integration cost results on
23 the same timelines that it has selected for other significant elements of the

1 avoided cost rate. Integration study methodologies and assumptions should be
2 reviewed and updated with every two-year IRP cycle and associated gas and
3 market prices should be no more than two years old. If the Commission
4 considers a PURPA-specific update too burdensome, then the wind integration
5 cost should be demonstrated to be consistent with the last yearly power cost rate
6 case filing.

7 **Q. Do IRPs provide a sufficient forum for scrutiny and specific Commission**
8 **approval of wind integration studies?**

9 A. Generally, no. IRPs can provide a good forum for learning about utility wind
10 integration studies, and the Commission has increasingly required Technical
11 Review Committees to sign off on study methodology. However, major problems
12 with wind integration studies have prompted the Commission to direct utilities to
13 make improvements to the studies and/or to the associated process in the next
14 IRP cycle. That direction has not identified the appropriate wind integration cost
15 for the intervening time period. This type of result in an IRP would not produce
16 adequate justification for a PURPA rate adjustment. In addition, even where
17 studies do not contain major methodological flaws, studies are scrutinized in
18 IRPs only for their effect on long-term resource planning. Within the IRP, a
19 compelling demonstration that the wind integration cost does not accurately
20 reflect the cost of integrating QFs would not be likely to garner significant
21 Commission attention unless it affected the utility's preferred portfolio selection.
22 Yet, flawed wind integration cost estimates may alter prospects for QF
23 development long before they change the preferred portfolio selection.

1 **Q. Are rate cases a better source for scrutinizing and approving wind**
2 **integration costs to be used for PURPA avoided cost adjustments?**

3 A. Not always. Like IRPs, rate cases can be a good forum to gain information about
4 the foundation for wind integration cost estimates. However, even if questions
5 were raised about wind integration costs in annual power cost adjustment cases,
6 those cases frequently may be settled without rulings on specific issues.
7 Eventually, it may be possible for the Commission to set PURPA integration
8 adjustments equivalent to the specific wind integration tariffs approved by the
9 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (“FERC”) for application to merchant
10 wind facilities, but few utilities have as yet secured wind integration tariffs through
11 FERC.

12 **Q. For the present, what do you recommend as the most appropriate forum for**
13 **settling wind integration cost adjustments to PURPA rates?**

14 A. I recommend that if IRP review identifies significant problems with a wind
15 integration study then the acknowledgment order should address the treatment of
16 wind integration cost adjustments for PURPA rates. If wind integration costs used
17 in IRPs do not accurately reflect present wind integration costs, the Commission
18 should identify a cost other than the utility-proposed cost as an integration
19 adjustment for QFs. Otherwise, a PURPA-specific docket or tariff filing will have
20 to be identified as the forum for establishing QF wind integration adjustments,
21 which would be an additional administrative burden on all parties.

22

23

1 **Q. Can you give some concrete examples to illustrate your recommendation**
2 **for regular updates and specific approval of PURPA integration cost**
3 **adjustments?**

4 A. Yes, I can provide examples from my experience with the wind integration
5 studies of Idaho Power, PGE, and PacifiCorp. In particular, I can explain why
6 neither Idaho Power's nor PGE's present wind integration studies would be
7 appropriate foundations for wind integration adjustments to avoided cost rates
8 today.

9 **Q. Why is Idaho Power's wind integration study insufficient to form the**
10 **foundation for PURPA avoided cost rate adjustments?**

11 A. Idaho Power's wind integration study was developed largely without stakeholder
12 or Technical Review Committee ("TRC") participation. The company shared its
13 nearly completed study with a TRC following the Commission's IRP
14 acknowledgment order (Order No. 12-177) directing Idaho Power to "form a wind
15 integration study technical review committee that is fully engaged in the process."
16 However, Idaho Power has not elicited any written feedback from the TRC,
17 shared TRC feedback with stakeholders, nor incorporated TRC suggestions into
18 the wind integration study that it now presents to the Commission for
19 acknowledgment as part of its IRP Update in LC 53.

20 Even more significant are the study's major methodological flaws. Idaho Power
21 calculates wind's balancing reserve requirements based on the day-ahead
22 forecast errors; wind integration reserve requirements should be based on hour-
23 ahead schedule errors. Hour ahead schedule errors are much smaller than day-

1 ahead errors, and are the standard for measuring integration reserve
2 requirements. Another significant limitation is Idaho Power's reliance on synthetic
3 data to determine the wind integration reserve requirement. Synthetic data tends
4 to be overly correlated with the remaining wind generation data, thereby
5 overestimating the wind integration balancing requirements.

6 **Q. How would you propose that the Commission address those issues with**
7 **Idaho Power's wind integration cost study in setting avoided cost rates?**

8 A. The Commission soon will consider whether to acknowledge Idaho Power's IRP
9 Update, which includes its wind integration study, in LC 53. I recommend that the
10 Commission do so with an eye to whether the study reasonably justifies a
11 specific cost adjustment for QF rates. If not, I recommend that the Commission
12 direct ongoing improvements to the study, but also that the Commission identify
13 an appropriate discount to the utility proposal or other alternative for use in
14 PURPA avoided cost rates until the utility produces a better-supported study. For
15 example, the Commission could direct Idaho Power to continue using its existing
16 rate adjustment (\$6.50/MWh) until it has met higher methodological and
17 procedural standards for its study.

18 **Q. Why is PGE's wind integration study insufficient to form the foundation for**
19 **PURPA avoided cost rate adjustments?**

20 A. As with Idaho Power, there are procedural and methodological reasons why
21 PGE's wind integration cost study is presently insufficient to form the foundation
22 for avoided cost rate adjustments. First, PGE's wind integration study was
23 presented in November 2011 and discussed at a Commission public meeting in

1 January 2012, but PGE did not seek or receive acknowledgment of the study.
2 Although RNP considered the study to be a vast improvement over PGE's
3 previous efforts, PGE discussed the study as a "base case" and RNP cautioned
4 that its conservative assumptions did not warrant using the study for ratemaking
5 or IRP use. Moreover, PGE's study uses gas and market prices that are now
6 significantly out of step with those used to generate avoided cost rates. With
7 regard to the methodology, a primary concern was PGE's assumption that the
8 majority of its generators would not be able to provide balancing reserves.
9 However, PGE's response to RNP-03 makes it clear that this study assumption is
10 incorrect and that the lower cost balancing reserves are available to integrate
11 wind. Finally, RNP encouraged PGE to model intrahour scheduling practices, as
12 the utility currently practices with BPA.

13 **Q. What do you propose PGE use for wind integration cost adjustments?**

14 A. The Commission should address the above concerns in its review of PGE's next
15 IRP to be filed in November 2013. If a wind integration adjustment to the PURPA
16 avoided cost tariff is required before the IRP is acknowledged, then I recommend
17 that the Commission direct PGE to use BPA's wind integration cost to adjust
18 avoided cost rates.

19 **Q. What lessons do you draw from PacifiCorp's wind integration study?**

20 A. In the most recent IRP cycle, PacifiCorp has developed a wind integration study
21 that contains major methodological improvements. PacifiCorp's study also
22 demonstrates that gas and market price assumptions have a dramatic effect on
23 wind integration cost results. The evolution of PacifiCorp's wind integration study

1 demonstrates that achieving higher standards for wind integration studies can
2 make a major difference for PURPA avoided cost rate adjustments.

3 **CONCLUSION**

4 **Q. Please summarize your testimony.**

5 A. I recommend that the Commission retain the central elements of its existing
6 PURPA implementation. In particular, a strong regulatory control can eliminate
7 potential for “disaggregation” as a basis for lowering the published rate/standard
8 contract cap. With regard to integration cost adjustments, I recommend that the
9 Commission reject adjustments for solar QFs at this time and that it establish a
10 well-defined process for approving wind integration cost adjustments.

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I HEREBY CERTIFY that I served the foregoing REPLY TESTIMONY OF JIMMY LINDSAY upon the following parties on the service list, via electronic mail, on March 18, 2013:

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