



## Renewable Energy in Oregon: A Vision for Responsible Development & Transmission

Few environmental issues are more pressing than that of global climate change, which is already dramatically altering the ecosystems on which we rely for food, water, wildlife and many other natural resources. This crisis makes clear the need to conserve and restore ecosystems, which serve as an important buffer against the negative effects of global warming and create resiliency for the planet and its inhabitants. Ultimately, though, solving the climate crisis will require major reductions in global carbon emissions, which in turn will require that we dramatically change the way we use and produce energy.

To achieve this goal, we will need innovation in energy conservation, efficiency and storage, the swift deployment of distributed forms of renewable energy such as rooftop solar panels, and the conversion of our transportation systems to less-polluting alternatives. Even with all these advancements in conservation and distributed generation, we will still require the siting of a large number of utility-scale renewable energy projects and associated transmission, both in Oregon and throughout the Northwest (some 4500 MW, according to experts).

This transition presents both challenges and opportunities. Poorly sited wind projects, for example, can harm birds, bats, scenic vistas and even ecosystem integrity. But a new energy economy can also bring high-paying jobs and revenue to struggling rural communities.

To date, roughly 1700 megawatts of renewable energy has been developed in Oregon without opposition from the conservation community. As development is increasing, though, environmental and social conflicts are also increasing. Conservation groups and renewable energy advocates must find a way to harmonize our mutual goal of slowing and ultimately reversing the damage to earth's ecosystems caused by our carbon-based energy system. Because we need large-scale renewable energy development to meet our broader goal, there is an immediate need to forge alliances with renewable energy advocates and establish common principles to reach shared objectives.

In order to be able to evaluate and support individual projects, we as conservationists require a better understanding of how large projects fit into an overall energy plan. We also need to be able to evaluate projects based on clear and empirical criteria from site plans and environmental studies. From there, we will have the ability to judge potential impacts and options for mitigation. We can then support those projects that have a net-benefit and reach the dual goals of mitigating and adapting to climate change.

This approach will require developers to be transparent and forthcoming about potential projects and will require conservationists to embrace a new paradigm where in some cases we will be actively supporting certain development projects. This challenges all of us to focus on our common ground and the very real positive benefits that renewable energy projects can provide if developed responsibly. Conservationists will need to make a concerted effort to understand the realities of project economics and the challenges of permitting projects. Likewise, developers will need to agree to best practices and accept the fact that certain areas should be avoided in the short-term while more information is developed on potential project impacts, and that other areas may need to be avoided permanently.

At a minimum, the undersigned conservation organizations are committed to: (1) working with the renewable energy development community as allies and partners, and receiving the same in return; (2) developing a combined state energy and land use plan; (3) working with the renewable development community to establish binding standards at a statewide level, modeled on the Columbia Plateau Guidelines; and (4) agreeing on additional policy ideas that can be jointly pursued with the renewable development community, both at the state and at the federal level (i.e., with the Oregon delegation).

We believe these assurances indicate our commitment to the cause of a clean energy economy and we look forward to working with the renewable energy development community on a shared agenda.

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Audubon Society of Portland, Central Oregon LandWatch, Defenders of Wildlife,  
Hells Canyon Preservation Council, Natural Resources Defense Council, Oregon Natural Desert Association,  
Oregon Sierra Club, Western Environmental Law Center, The Wilderness Society