

## Movement on Community Solar Policy in Oregon

On October 16, under a PUC public meeting to discuss [UM 1746](#), the Oregon PUC accepted PUC staff recommendations – with amendments – regarding a community solar definition and key program design attributes. The meeting was the last of several held at the PUC over the past few months involving an array of stakeholders (including OSEIA) discussing (as well as submitting comments on) their perspectives on the preferred attributes in a community solar program design. This process and the report out were mandated by a bill passed earlier in the year - [HB 2941](#), and have ultimately resulted in the PUC's refined recommendations in this [formal document](#) sent to the legislature on October 26.

The PUC recommendations are generally good for OSEIA and the state's solar industry as it paves the way toward legislation which could open up a new solar market segment and opportunity. If adopted as legislation, there would be a community solar program of up to about 19 MW in PGE and 13 MW in PacifiCorp territories during an initial two-year phase. Residential and small commercial customers would be eligible as participating subscribers in a project, and actual project ownership and administration could be held by any entity – private developer, non-profit, utility, etc. Participants would be credited at the "[Resource Value of Solar](#)" (RVOS – currently being developed in a different proceeding). These are just a few of the design attributes highlighted by the PUC, to view more go [here](#).

The next step is for the legislature to consider these recommendations with regards to potentially developing a bill - ideally that could be introduced and passed during the 2016 short session. A precursor to this effort occurred during Oregon's recent Legislative Committee Days (period where committees can hold informational hearings), when Jason Eisdorfer (PUC Utility Program Director) presented the PUC recommendations to the House Energy and Environment Committee. Although no decisions are made during this type of hearing, there were many questions and Jason did a respectable job holding the line on mostly solid community solar attribute recommendations.

While OSEIA is generally supportive of the bulk of the PUC recommendations, there are a few tweaks and clarifications that we are urging get addressed during the legislative process. For example, a more robust program would allow for all customers to participate in a community solar project, while requiring that 50% of each project be allocated for residential and small commercial customers. As a matter of equity, this would allow larger commercial customers, municipal entities, and others to have similar access to the development and benefits of solar, but these larger customers can also provide project developers with greater certainty and ultimately reduced financing costs. Another example of an area we think needs to be addressed is that an RVOS value may not be identified prior to a potential program being implemented, and there should therefore be an interim rate clarified - we recommend the retail rate.

OSEIA is working with allies to support the bill's development, including addressing the changes noted above and other issues where the program design could be improved. Ideally this is completed sooner than later, since the 2016 legislative session is only 35 days. In parallel, efforts will be made to expand the eligibility of incentives currently offered to rooftop solar customers (i.e., [ETO](#) and [RETC](#)), to be available for community solar projects and/or customers. This is a critical component to making community solar projects economically viable in the state.

To learn more about this effort and OSEIA's involvement, contact Board Member Charlie Coggeshall ([Charlie.coggeshall@easycleanenergy.com](mailto:Charlie.coggeshall@easycleanenergy.com)) with [Clean Energy Collective](#). To learn more about community solar, a good resource is the [Community Solar Hub](#).