

PortlandTribune

GUEST OPINION

PGE plan taps diverse sources

TWO VIEWS • PGE's Boardman plant should be closed • Region's energy future requires reliance on many sources

BY JIM PIRO

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Last week, Portland General Electric shared its draft resource plan with stakeholders, regulators and the public. This plan outlines what we think will be the best mix of resources we can marshal over the next 20 years to provide reliable, responsibly generated and reasonably priced electricity that will serve the needs of more than 1.5 million Oregonians.

This is a solid plan to help lay the groundwork for Oregon's energy future, reflecting our customers' priorities and making good use of existing resources. It took 18 months of research and analysis to develop it, including six day-long public workshops with customer groups, environmental advocates, energy experts, and regulators, as well as countless hours of computer modeling — all aimed at finding the resource portfolio with the best combination of cost and risk for our customers.

We took into account environmental impacts, fuel-supply availability and price volatility, resource diversity, and the ability of different kinds of resources to reliably meet demand.

Much of the resulting draft can be boiled down to something your grandmother knew a long time ago: It's a bad idea to put all of your eggs in one basket. Every different resource for generating electricity has advantages and disadvantages. If we rely too heavily on any one resource, our customers face increased costs, risks and reliability problems.

That's true for conventional resources such as coal, natural gas and the Northwest's signature hydro power. It's also true for new resources such as wind and solar. That's why our plan builds on a mix of these resources to take advantage of the strengths of each while minimizing their disadvantages.

At PGE, we are committed to reducing the environmental impact of generating electricity by capturing more energy efficiency and adding more renewable power sources to our energy mix. We also understand that the



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Power lines near Boardman in Eastern Oregon.

system can't power up and down with the wind or sunshine — it has to be there when the electricity is needed.

So our draft plan targets actions to help our customers manage their energy use. We expect to meet nearly half of PGE's load growth from now through 2020 by pursuing all energy efficiency measures identified as achievable by the Energy Trust of Oregon. We'll also implement measures to help manage peak electricity needs with systems that can reliably deliver short-term reductions in our load.

Beyond that, we will target new renewable resources to meet the goals in the state's renewable energy standard — a law we supported and helped craft — on or ahead of schedule.

But more must be done. We'll also need to add new, efficient natural gas-fired generation with state-of-the-art equipment and pollution controls. These resources will not only help serve existing electricity demand and meet additional growth, they also will be used to back up our intermittent renewable resources like wind and solar. Natural gas-fired generation provides reliability you can count on 24 hours a day, seven days a week

At the same time, we must make prudent use of the resources we already have while acting to reduce their environmental footprint. That's why we propose to move forward with aggressive new emissions controls on our coal-fired power plant near Boardman. It's one of our lowest-cost, most reliable facilities, and with retrofits that comply with stringent new rules adopted by the state Environmental Quality Commission we can dramatically reduce the plant's emissions while keeping it online to serve our customers.

We're also putting together plans for new transmission lines that will help meet our customers' growing energy needs, enable development of more renewable power projects, and enhance the reliability of the electrical grid.

Last month, the Portland Tribune carried an editorial that pointed out that our region's energy choices won't be easy (Our Opinion, Aug. 13). Competing demands, priorities, and preferences make for tough decisions, and we look forward to a healthy discussion of the merits of our plan with our stakeholders and state regulators in the coming months.

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