Celebrating 50 Years of Service:
History of the Oregon Department of Energy

Oregon has a long legacy of environmental stewardship. Our state has passed bold legislation, including the Beach Bill and the Oregon Bottle Bill, and we continue by working to reduce carbon emissions and setting Oregon on a path toward a clean energy future. In 1975, legislation established the Oregon Department of Energy to promote the efficient use of energy resources and to develop permanently sustainable energy resources.

The following is a chronical of events, individuals, and actions that led to the creation of ODOE, and which inform Oregon's energy policies today. This historical narrative begins by placing Oregon in context during the 1970s, when the global energy crisis and Arab Oil Embargo affected international markets and caused gas prices in Oregon to soar.

Early 1970s: Setting the Stage

- **1971: The Nuclear and Thermal Energy Council is Formed.** Oregon's energy facility siting law originates with formation of the Nuclear and Thermal Energy Council in 1971. The role of the council is to regulate the siting of nuclear and coal-fired generating plants that have an electric generating capacity of at least 200 megawatts. *Learn more*
- **1973: Arab Oil Embargo.** Oil-exporting Arab countries proclaim an embargo against Israeli allies like the U.S. Nationally, oil prices skyrocket and gas stations are forced to ration fuel. This energy crisis and the concern about energy scarcity help lead Oregon policy makers to establish an Oregon Department of Energy two years later. *Learn more*
- **1973: Oregon's First Biennial Energy Plan Published.** The Oregon Office of Energy Research and Planning writes the first Biennial Energy Plan, a precursor to the Biennial Energy Report. The plan is called "Transitions: A Book on Future Energy."
- **1974: Oregon Energy Policy Review Committee Created.** Governor Tom McCall establishes the Oregon Energy Policy Review Committee to address the state's energy challenges and explore alternative energy sources. *Learn more*

Late 1970s: Establishing the Oregon Department of Energy

- **1975: The Oregon Department of Energy is Established.** Oregon Legislature creates the Oregon Department of Energy. The themes of scarcity, sustainability, energy efficiency, and energy education are embedded in ODOE's authorizing statute (ORS 469.010), which set forth the following:

An early ODOE logo used until 2017

> *Continued growth in demand for nonrenewable energy forms poses a serious and immediate, as well as future, problem. It is essential that future generations not be left a legacy of vanished or depleted resources, resulting in massive environmental, social, and financial impact.*
>
> *It is the goal of ODOE to promote the efficient use of energy resources and to develop permanently sustainable energy resources. The need exists for comprehensive state leadership in energy production, distribution, and utilization."* *Learn more*

- **1975: Energy Facility Siting Council is Formed.** The Energy Facility Siting Council is created and charged with overseeing the siting, construction, and operation energy facilities in a manner consistent with the protection of public health and safety — and in compliance with energy policy — while protecting Oregon's environment. One of the first facilities approved by EFSC is PGE's 550 MW Boardman Coal Plant in Morrow County. The plant is eventually constructed and placed into service in 1980. *Learn more*

- **1977: Oregon established the Residential Energy Tax Credit.** The Oregon legislature passes HB 2101 to create the Residential Energy Tax Credit, which for 40 years provides incentives for homeowners to invest in energy-efficient improvements and renewable energy systems. The following year, HB 3258 creates the Business Energy Tax Credit. *Learn more*

- **1979: Oregon's First Renewable Energy Project is Approved.** EFSC approves its first renewable energy project, a 40-megawatt (850 40- to 80-kilowatt turbines) proposal by Wind Energy Specialist for a site in Curry County. The facility is approved but never constructed. *Learn more*

1980s: Nuclear Clean-Up and Safety

- **1980: Oregon Voters Prohibit New Nuclear Plants.** Oregon voters pass Ballot Measure 7, which prohibits the licensing of a new nuclear power plant unless it is approved by the voters and only if there is a permanent repository licensed by the federal government for disposal of high-level radioactive waste. Today, there is still no permanent repository for disposal of high-level radioactive waste in the U.S. *Learn more*

Hanford Site, B Reactor

- **1986: Oregon Public Utility Commission is Created.** Oregon voters approve a ballot measure finalizing a three-person, Governor-appointed Public Utility Commission of Oregon to replace the single commissioner system previously in place. OPUC continues to be an important partner to ODOE in working toward a safe, equitable, clean, and sustainable energy future. *Learn more*

- **1989: Hanford Site Cleanup Begins.** In 1989, the U.S. Department of Energy, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Washington State Department of Ecology sign the Hanford Federal Facility Agreement and Consent Order, commonly known as the Tri-Party Agreement. This agreement marks the formal beginning of the environmental cleanup effort at Hanford. *Learn more*

1990s: Foundation for Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy

- **1993: Trojan Nuclear Power Plant Closes.** After a series of mechanical problems, PGE permanently shutters the Trojan Nuclear Power Plant. ODOE plays a key role in the decommissioning process and ensuring the safe handling of nuclear materials. *Learn more*

- **1994: EFSC Approves Oregon's First Natural Gas Facility.** The Hermiston Generating Project becomes the first natural gas facility to receive a site certificate from EFSC. The 468-MW plant begins operation in 1996. *Learn more*

- **1997: PGE Purchased by Enron.** Portland General Electric, the utility with the most Oregon ratepayers, is bought by Enron for $2.1 billion and the assumption of $1.1 billion in debt. *Learn more*

- **1997: Oregon First to Set Price on Carbon.** Oregon becomes the first state to establish a price on carbon with the EFSC CO2 standard. It requires power plants to avoid, displace, or sequester a portion of their CO2 emissions; applicants can also pay a fee to offset the emissions. *Learn more*

- **1999: Public Purpose Charge Established.** Oregon legislature passes SB 1149, creating the Public Purpose Charge for energy efficiency, renewable, and low-income energy programs, as well as partially deregulating the electric sector by authorizing long-term direct access for certain large retail customers of investor-owned utilities.

  ODOE facilitates the administration of school district "Public Purpose Charge" funds, which are collected from Oregon's two largest utilities, Portland General Electric and Pacific Power. The Public Purpose Charge supports energy projects throughout the state, with funding directed to school energy and fleet audits and improvements. The funds support new windows, upgraded heating and cooling, energy efficient lighting, hot water systems, zero emission vehicles (including school buses!), electric vehicle chargers, and more. *Learn more*

2000s: Expansion of Renewable Energy and Climate Action

- **2001: Oregon's First Utility-Scale Wind Energy Facility is Constructed.** The EFSC-approved Stateline Wind Project in Umatilla County becomes the first utility-scale wind energy facility built in Oregon. The 222 MW facility has 229 turbines, each 440' tall. This project is the first of many wind facilities permitted by EFSC and that are now seen throughout Oregon. *Learn more*

- **2001: Founding of Energy Trust of Oregon.** Energy Trust of Oregon is created by the legislature as an independent nonprofit organization to administer energy efficiency and renewable energy programs funded by the public purpose charge. Since the founding of Energy Trust of Oregon, ODOE staff have proudly served as board members. *Learn more*

- **2001: Western Energy Crisis.** The Western Energy Crisis of 2001 causes power shortages in California and skyrocketing electricity prices across the west, including Oregon. Wholesale energy prices in the PNW briefly jumped to over $1,300 per megawatt hour, much higher than the typical price of under $50 per MWh. New efforts at deregulation, combined with historic drought conditions and market manipulation contribute to the crisis. *Learn more*

- **2002: Solar Arrays Installed on Capitol Building.** The State of Oregon becomes the first state to install solar panels on its capitol building in Salem. *Learn more*

- **2007: Oregon Sets Ambitions Energy Goals.** The Oregon Legislature passes SB 838 and the Renewable Energy Act, which sets ambitious goals for renewable energy development. ODOE is tasked with helping to implement the Renewable Portfolio Standard and supporting the development of wind, solar, and other renewable energy projects. The bill requires that 25 percent of the state's electricity come from renewable sources by 2025. This is a significant step toward promoting renewable energy development, including wind, solar, and biomass. *Learn more*

- **2007: The Oregon Global Warming Commission is Established.** The Oregon Global Warming Commission tracks trends in greenhouse gas emissions, recommends ways to coordinate state and local efforts to reduce emissions, and works to prepare communities for the effects of climate change. *Learn more*

- **2005: Western Energy Crisis Settlement Awarded.** Following the 2000-2001 Western Energy Crisis, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approves a settlement for (a) $47 million in cash; (b) $875 million in an allowed unsecured claim; and (c) $600 million civil penalty in favor of the Attorneys General for California, Washington, and Oregon. *Learn more*

- **2014: Sunset of Oregon's Business Energy Tax Credit.** Under this program, ODOE supports almost 25,000 projects that help save energy, displace conventional energy sources, or generate renewable energy. *Learn more*

- **2016: Oregon Passes Coal to Clean Transition Plan.** HB 4036 and SB 1547 are passed as landmark legislation, requiring Oregon's largest utilities to phase out coal-fired power by 2030 and achieve 50 percent renewable energy by 2040. This marks a significant shift toward cleaner energy sources and reducing greenhouse gas emissions. *Learn more*

- **2017: Sunset of Oregon's Residential Energy Tax Credit**. Over the lifetime of this program, among other efforts, more than 15,000 solar projects are approved, with a production estimate of about 75 million kWh/year. *Learn more*

- **2017: Electric Vehicle Rebate Program Created.** With the passage of the Keep Oregon Moving Act (HB 2017), Oregon adopts an Electric Vehicle Rebate program at Oregon DEQ that includes a "Charge Ahead" component for low-income participants. Oregon Governor Kate Brown issues Executive Orders 17-20 and 17-21 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by accelerating energy efficiency in Oregon's built environment and accelerating zero emission vehicle adoption. *Learn more*

- **2017: ODOE Tasked to Develop Oregon's Biennial Energy Report**. The Legislature passes HB 2343, introduced by ODOE. The bill charges the department with developing a new Biennial Energy Report to inform local, state, regional, and federal energy policy development and energy planning and investments. View the latest Biennial Energy Report *here*.

- **2018: EFSC Approves Oregon's First State Jurisdictional Solar Project.** The Boardman Solar project, with a capacity of 75 MW, becomes the first state-jurisdiction solar project to receive a site certificate from EFSC. Although the developer ultimately did not construct this facility, most projects in front of EFSC today are now solar projects. *Learn more*

- **2019: ODOE's Solar + Storage Rebate Program Created.** Oregon legislature passes HB 2618, creating ODOE's Solar + Storage Rebate Program. The program issues rebates for solar electric systems and paired solar and solar storage systems. At least 25 percent of available rebate dollars are set aside for low- or moderate-income residential customers and low-income service providers. *Learn more*

- **2019: Oregon Sets EV Adoptions Goals.** Oregon legislature passes SB 1044, which sets an EV Adoption Goal of 250,000 by 2025, among other targets. By July 2024, more than 100,000 EVs are registered in Oregon. *Learn more*

2020s: Strengthening Climate Policies and Increasing Renewable Energy

- **2020: Oregon Sets Ambitious Energy Efficiency Goals.** Governor Brown issues Executive Order 20-04, which directs state agencies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate the transition to clean energy. The order also sets new goals for reducing emissions by 45 percent below 1990 levels by 2035 and 80 percent by 2050, and includes directives to ODOE to update energy efficiency standards for products. *Learn more*

- **2021: ODOE Establishes a New Mission and Strategic Plan.** On behalf of Oregonians across the state, ODOE adopts a new mission: "The Oregon Department of Energy helps Oregonians make informed decisions and maintain a resilient and affordable energy system. We advance solutions to shape an equitable clean energy transition, protect the environment and public health, and responsibly balance energy needs and impacts for current and future generation." *Learn more*

- **2021: The Energy Efficient Wildfire Rebuilding Incentive Program Created.** In HB 5006, the legislature establishes a program and provides ODOE with $10 million to provide incentives for energy efficient rebuilding of residential and commercial structures destroyed during the 2020 Labor Day wildfires. *Learn more*

- **2021: Oregon Adopts 100% Clean Electricity Targets.** Oregon passes House Bill 2021, setting one of the most ambitious clean energy standards in the nation. The bill requires the state's largest utilities to provide 100 percent clean electricity by 2040, with interim targets of 80 percent by 2030 and 90 percent by 2035. The bill also creates the Community Renewable Energy Grant program, administered by ODOE, that provides grants for planning and developing community renewable energy and energy resilience projects. The program launches in 2022. *Learn more*

- **2022: ODOE Publishes the Oregon Renewable Energy Siting Assessment (ORESA) Mapping Tool.** The project, funded by the U.S. Department of Defense, includes a data-rich, online mapping tool for policy makers and local governments. *Learn more*

- **2022: Oregon Heat Pump Programs Created.** In response to the heat dome event of 2021, during which about 100 Oregonians died of heat-related illness — often in their own homes — the legislature passes SB 1536 in 2022 to bring much-needed heat relief. This legislation creates two programs at ODOE to deploy heat pumps in Oregon homes. *Learn more*

Technician installs a residential heat pump

- **2022: Boardman, Oregon's Last Coal Plant, is Demolished.** The Boardman Coal plant, which had become Oregon's last remaining coal-fired power plant by the time it was shut down in 2020, gets an explosive final send off. Demolition crews set off explosives to bring down the facility's towering 656-foot smokestack in a controlled fall, along with the boiler, destroying most of the plant's main building. *Learn more*

- **2023: Pacific Northwest Selected for Regional Clean Hydrogen Hub.** The U.S. Department of Energy selects the Pacific Northwest Hydrogen Association's PNWH2 Hub for award negotiations as one of the Regional Clean Hydrogen Hubs following a competitive nationwide process. DOE's H2Hubs will kickstart a national network of clean hydrogen producers, consumers, and connective infrastructure while supporting the production, storage, delivery, and end-use of clean hydrogen. ODOE's Director becomes the Chair of the Association. *Learn more*

- **2023: Oregon Climate Action Commission Established.** In 2023, the Oregon Legislature passes HB 3409, which expands, modernizes, and renames the Oregon Global Warming Commission to the Oregon Climate Action Commission. *Learn more*

- **2024: Oregon Awarded $86.6 Million Solar for All Federal Grant.** The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announces that Oregon will receive an $86.6 million Solar for All grant to support renewable energy adoption for low-income Oregonians. The Oregon Solar for All Coalition includes the Oregon Department of Energy, Energy Trust of Oregon, and Bonneville Environmental Foundation. The grant will be used to plan and develop solar programs, including leveraging existing solar technology incentives and support platforms already in use. *Learn more*

- **2024: ODOE Publishes New Oregon Energy Security Plan.** The Oregon Department of Energy publishes a new Oregon Energy Security Plan that outlines the state's current energy infrastructure, quantifies threats and hazards that cause energy insecurity, and identifies potential measures the state and its partners can implement to manage risk and strengthen Oregon's energy security. *Learn more*

- **2024: Oregon Awarded $113 Million for Home Energy Rebates.** The Oregon Department of Energy is awarded over $113 million from the U.S. Department of Energy for two new home energy rebate programs that will provide financial incentives to single-family and multifamily households for eligible high-efficiency home improvements, appliances, and equipment. ODOE expects that rebates will be available in late 2025 or early 2026. *Learn more*

- **2024: 100,000 EVs Regisitered in Oregon.** Oregon crosses the 100,000 registered electric cars, SUVs, and light trucks threshold in July 2024, according to DMV registration data. The number includes both battery electric vehicles and plug-in hybrid vehicles. *Learn more*

- **2024: The 2024 Biennial Energy Report is Released.** The Oregon Department of Energy publishes its 2024 Biennial Energy Report on November 1, featuring fundamental information and data about energy in Oregon, highlights of emerging energy resources, and foundational "Energy 101s" on current topics and technologies. *Learn more*

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