

Conservation and Renewables

Unlike companies like PGE, public power entities implement the conservation and renewable effort that corresponds to the wishes of the local voters, who elect the boards of directors. Public power utilities in the Eugene area, for example, do more conservation and renewable resources development per capita than PGE, while public power utilities in eastern Oregon do less.

Clackamas County residents have always been supportive of conservation and renewables. Solar and wind power have long-term benefits. Unfortunately, green power makes up only a small portion of PGE's overall electricity resource portfolio.

Across the Northwest, the most aggressive purchasers of nonpolluting energy have been publicly owned municipal utilities, said Rachel Shimshak, director of the Renewable Northwest Project, a Portland nonprofit group.

In just one example, six Northwest consumer-owned utilities, including three PUDs, along with the Bonneville Environmental Foundation, a nonprofit, have bought wind power development rights on about 20,000 acres along the Columbia River near Roosevelt, WA. They are constructing a wind farm with the capacity to generate 100 to 200 megawatts of electricity.

The Eugene Water & Electric Board has programs where they funnel a portion of the price premium into the construction of "clean" power plants that displace fossil-fuel fired facilities. Renewable Northwest Project found that the Eugene green power program had one of the highest customer participation rates at 3.3 percent. By comparison, PGE has a participation rate of customers purchasing green energy of about 0.7 percent. PacifiCorp's rate is about 0.4 percent.

Public ownership is the most effective way to make sure we're good stewards of the environment and that's why numerous organizations that support green power have endorsed the efforts of the Oregon Public Power Coalition to form five people's utility districts in PGE's territory.