



## TESTIMONY OF CHUCK THURMAN, VICE PRESIDENT OREGON MUNICIPAL ELECTRIC UTILITIES ASSOCIATION

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT  
FEBRUARY 3, 2015

Chair Vega Pederson, Vice Chairs, Members of the Committee, I am Chuck Thurman, Vice President of the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association. I appreciate the opportunity to be here today and provide an overview of Oregon's municipal electric utilities.

### **Who are we?**

Eleven of Oregon's municipally owned and operated electric utilities joined to form the Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association (OMEU) via an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) authorized by ORS 190. OMEU supports the collective interests of its members and their customer owners at the state legislature, state agencies, various trade associations and the Bonneville Power Association (BPA). A twelfth municipally owned electric utility in Oregon, the Eugene Water and Electric Board (EWB), maintains independent representation and coordinates with OMEU. Please see Attachment A for a [map](#) illustrating municipal electric utilities with their inception dates.

### **Pioneers among consumer owned utilities**

Starting over 100 years ago, advocates of public power fought to form municipal utilities which cleared the way legislatively for the formation of cooperative (Co-ops) and people's utility districts (PUDs), all of which are known today as Consumer Owned Utilities (COUs). For a map of the COU service areas, please see Attachment B.

### **Uniquely community oriented**

Municipally owned utilities are governed by their city council or utility board comprised of community members who set rates, regulatory policies, develop programs and services and respond to the specific customer needs – with the primary focus of delivering safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

### **Resource mix – clean and renewable**

OMEU members obtain all or most of their power from the BPA. A few members independently obtain a small amount of hydro power from Grant County, Washington. In addition, [McMinnville Water and Light partnered with Riverbend Landfill](#) to generate

enough electricity from landfill gas for about 2500 homes and businesses (about 4 megawatts).

Please refer to BPA's presentation today, for more details regarding the resource mix.

### **Early adopters**

In 1981, the [City of Ashland](#) passed one of the first citywide Solar Access Protection Ordinances in the United States. ([Sec.18.70](#)). Ashland purchases about 98% of their power from BPA, another .05% is from solar and 2% is [hydro](#) at Reed Reservoir with City-owned turbines.

[Forest Grove Light and Power](#) installed solar on their utility building which powers city electric vehicles.

The [City of Monmouth](#) is more than 50 percent complete in converting their lighting to LED, this includes street lights and the new police department.

In 1984, [Milton-Freewater City Light & Power](#) started controlling peak demand and direct load (see <http://www.omeu.org/news.html>) which reduced customer rates. In 2012, Milton-Freewater was selected to participate in the \$178 million USDOE Pacific NW Smart Grid Demonstration Project.

### **Where do we expect to be in five years?**

Each utility responds to its customers' needs and aspirations through its local volunteer governing body. Over the next five years, renewable standards, distributed generation, electric vehicles, smart meters, and smart grid are issues each local governing body will explore and study to make the best informed policy decisions for their community, balancing policy leadership with affordable power.

### **In conclusion**

Oregon municipal electric utilities are the epitome of local control and responsibility. For example, when a single parent is struggling to pay her power bill, she can walk into our offices and we work with her face to face. We are a phone call, short walk or drive for any customer with a question or idea. The integrity of our systems, both financial and structural, is strong because we are directly accountable to our customers—more specifically, our governing bodies are accountable to their neighbors and fellow citizens.

Thank you for your time and attention. I am happy to answer any questions.



Chuck Thurman, Vice President  
Oregon Municipal Electric Utilities Association