

Planning process to install power line under Columbia

The public meeting phase opened this week on a proposal to build a \$1.5 billion, 100-mile-long transmission line under the Columbia River.

The Cascade Renewable Transmission project is proposed to improve power transmission between where electricity is generated east of the Cascades and where it's consumed, along the I-5 corridor.

It would also move power past transmission bottlenecks in Portland to an important north-south high-voltage transmission route, and to data centers on the city's west side. The project faces significant opposition for various reasons, from Native rights groups and environmental organizations.

First of all, before the recent release of the application, opposition groups have expressed frustrations with the few details the project developers provided to the public. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers came to a similar conclusion earlier this year, when it said the project's federal permitting application did not have enough information.

Native rights groups and other opponents also say the project may cause significant damage to the river's struggling ecology, and



Cascade Renewable Transmission is planning to build a 100-mile-long transmission line between Bonneville Power Administration's Big Eddy substation in The Dalles, near The Dalles Dam, and Portland General Electric's Harborton substation in Portland.

the long-neglected treaty-reserved rights for Native nations of the Columbia River Basin.

Lawyers and technical experts for the opposition groups have spent the past month scrambling to review the giant application, said Julie Carter, a lawyer and longtime policy analyst for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fishing Commission.

"You're digging in this stressed river that supports the treaty-reserved resources of the tribes, so we're going to be on the defensive immediately," Ms. Carter said. "This river has been impacted so much by so many energy developments over the last century plus."

Studies have found hydropower dams have been the main driver of the Columbia's increasingly hot temperatures and salmon's broader struggles to remain in the river.

Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead returns were between 10 million and 18 million fish before the hydropower system. Recently, they've

numbered about 2.3 million.

Wild fish, in particular, have suffered. Most wild Columbia Basin salmon and steelhead runs are less than 5 percent of their pre-1850s levels, a 2022 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration report found.

Currently, 13 Columbia Basin runs are under Endangered Species Act protections.

Ms. Carter said she also worries in particular about lamprey, a species Native nations in the Columbia Basin have worked hard to save. So little is known about lamprey right now that the project could dig its channel right into the middle of their migration route.

While Carter said the group still had a way to go in reviewing the application, one thing caught their attention right off the bat.

"The proponent attached our tribal energy vision," she said, "and wrote a section... that basically asserts that their project meets all the recommendations and goals and objectives of the tribal energy vision—and we are unhappy about that because it is not true."

Chris Hocker is the project lead for PowerBridge, which runs the project. He said the devel-

opment would meet a great energy need of the region. "The situation is growing worse by the day in terms of available transmission capacity," Mr. Hocker said.

He said Oregon had asked the company to address the tribal fishing commission's vision, and the company is trying to include the same information across all permits. "The only way the agencies are going to be able to work together is if they all understand the project on the same basis," he added.

Hocker said he intended to be at the public meetings this week; so proponents, opponents and anyone with questions can hear more. He also expects the Army Corps will soon announce that the project will require an environmental impact statement, an intensive process. The project will also need the Corps' approval. And because the project lies between Oregon and Washington, it will also need permitting from both states.

But the developers are in no rush. Earlier this year, they turned down expedited federal approval from the current federal administration, in part to avoid drawing the ire of the two states.

Falls: purchase plan for Moore's Island

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For instance, PGE is in the middle of a federal lawsuit with the Oregon Department of State Lands and the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde over a state permit for a tribal fishing platform at the base of the falls.

In court proceedings, lawyers for PGE argued that its federal energy license requires the utility to take ownership of more land at the waterfall and to have more say in tribal access to the site, a position opposed by the Grand Ronde tribes. A ruling on PGE's request to condemn much of the land at Willamette Falls is expected any day.

The lawsuit was one of several flashpoints in a long-simmering conflict between the Grand Ronde tribe, and the four other Northwest tribes that trace ancestry and traditional practices back to the falls: The four others are the Warm Springs, Yakama, Siletz, and Umatilla tribes, working together through the Willamette Falls Trust.

Ms. Brown said the trust has tried to bring in the Grand Ronde tribe as well, but that collaboration has not materialized. The Grand Ronde tribes are pursuing a separate project, the tumwata village.

Moore's Island site

For the Willamette Falls Trust, once the PGE land is acquired, the work will begin on envisioning more specifically how best to use the site.

The plan is to demolish and clean up much of what's there, Kate Brown said, though that does not mean the old mill will be completely gone. Ms. Brown has found inspiration in the High Line Network, a group of industrial reuse projects across the country that build public spaces from the bones of industrial places, like Seattle's revamped Waterfront Park and San Francisco's Crissy Field.

The Willamette Falls Trust project is already listed on the High Line Network website, with Brown listed as the project leader.

"We're probably more on the end of re-wilding the built environment, but we also very much want to figure out if there's a way to creatively and innovatively reuse some of the infrastructure," she said, adding there is still a lot of room for discussion. "What will be on this space will be informed by conversations with community and with tribal members throughout the Pacific Northwest."

Overall the project may take a decade to complete. Still, with \$75 million committed to the project,

the trust and partners are acting with a sense of urgency to get the project off the ground. "This is truly a once-in-a-generation opportunity," Ms. Brown said.

"We won't likely have another chance, and that's how we are getting up every single day going to work."

"32nd Annual Warm Springs Tribal Member & Youth Exhibit"

Awards Announced!

2025 Judge's Choice, Traditional Category.
"Blue Flamez"
Beaded Necklace
by Terry Lynn Stradley.

2025 Judge's Choice, Contemporary Category.
"KsK's Nukwashai Ayats Patlapa"
Ceremonial Basket Hat
by Natalie Kirk

Photos by Angela Anne Smith

Recreation Presents

Tree lighting and visit with Santa

Festivities start @6pm

Dec 4th, 2025

For more information please contact the community wellness center at 541-553-3243

WS Prevention Presents

2025 Rez Formal Dance Snow Ball

Saturday December 13th

WS Old Elementary Gym

7pm-10pm

Admission: \$5

Spin the Wheel for a Prize

Pizza

Pictures Available

This event is formal, so dress to impress. All participants are required to be inside during the event. WSPD will be onsite during the event.

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE

Middle School: 7th -8th Grade

High School: 9th-12th Grade

Nominate: 3 Girls - 3 Boys for Middle School King and Queen

Nominate: 3 Girls - 3 Boys for High School King and Queen

Winners: Announced 9:30 pm (prizes for both)