

**BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION OF UTAH**

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**In the Matter of the Application  
of Rocky Mountain Power for  
Modification of Contract Term  
of PURPA Power Purchase  
Agreements with Qualifying  
Facilities**

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**DOCKET NO. 15-035-53  
Exhibit No. DPU 1.0 DIR**

**Direct Testimony of  
Charles E. Peterson**

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**FOR THE DIVISION OF PUBLIC UTILITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
STATE OF UTAH**

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**September 16, 2015**

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**Direct Testimony of Charles E. Peterson**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**Q. Please state your name, business address and title.**

A. My name is Charles E. Peterson. My business address is 160 East 300 South, Salt Lake City, Utah 84114. I am a Technical Consultant in the Utah Division of Public Utilities (Division, or DPU).

**Q. On whose behalf are you testifying?**

A. The Division.

**Q. Would you summarize your background for the record?**

A. I am currently a Technical Consultant for the Division. I have been employed by the Division for 10 years, during which time I have filed testimony and memoranda with the Commission involving a variety of economic, financial and policy topics.

Most significant for this docket is that I have been the primary Division staff person reviewing power purchase agreements (PPAs) under Schedule 38 for five or more years and I testified as one of the Division’s witnesses in Docket No. 12-035-100, in which the Commission considered changes to the method used for computing avoided costs for

23 qualifying facilities (QFs) under Schedule 38. More recently, I filed testimony on behalf of  
24 the Division in the wind and solar QF capacity contribution determination phase in Docket  
25 No. 14-035-140.

26

27 I have an M.S. in Economics and Master of Statistics degree, both from the University of  
28 Utah. My resume is attached as DPU Exhibit 1.1 DIR.

29

30 **Q. What is the purpose of your testimony in this matter?**

31 A. I present the Division's analysis and comments concerning the request by PacifiCorp, dba  
32 Rocky Mountain Power (PacifiCorp, or the Company), for a reduction in the length of new  
33 QF contracts to a maximum term of three years.<sup>1</sup>

34

35 As explained below, at this time the Division favors a maximum contract term of five years  
36 with a capacity payment based upon a twenty year analysis.

37

38 **Q. Please briefly outline your understanding of the issues raised by PacifiCorp in this**  
39 **matter.**

40 A. PacifiCorp in its Application and supported by testimony of its witness Mr. Paul H. Clements  
41 raises the following issues:

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<sup>1</sup> Application of Rocky Mountain Power, May 11, 2015, page 1.

- 42           • There has been a “dramatic increase in QF pricing requests” for contracts under  
43           PURPA<sup>2</sup> over the last two or three years.<sup>3</sup>
- 44           • If all of the potential projects come about, the Company could be forced to purchase  
45           more power from QFs than it needs for its total load.<sup>4</sup>
- 46           • The Company does not need additional power now, and does not expect to need  
47           additional resources<sup>5</sup> for ten or more years in the future.<sup>6</sup>
- 48           • Ratepayers are being asked to pay higher prices to support new QF contracts than  
49           they might have to pay in the future without the QF contracts.<sup>7</sup>
- 50           • 20-year contract terms are inconsistent with the Company’s risk management policies  
51           and the hedging policies that resulted from the hedging collaborative with regulators  
52           and ratepayers.<sup>8</sup>

53

54           The implication of the extreme case where QF generation exceeds the Company’s load is that  
55           the Company would have to idle all of its owned generation fleet (including its own  
56           renewable resources), and/or sell excess power into the wholesale markets, perhaps at a loss.

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<sup>2</sup> PURPA refers to the Public Utilities Policies Act of 1978, as amended.

<sup>3</sup> Application, page 6, supported by the  
Direct Testimony of Paul H. Clements, Docket No. 15-053-53, May 2015, pages 2 and 10-13.

<sup>4</sup> Clements, pages 2-3 and 10-13.

<sup>5</sup> In the Company’s 2015 Integrated Resource Plan, the Company indicates that it will meet increasing demand primarily with demand side management/efficiency programs and short-term contracts referred to as front office transactions. See PacifiCorp 2015 Integrated Resource Plan, Table 1.1, page 2.

[http://www.pacificorp.com/content/dam/pacificorp/doc/Energy\\_Sources/Integrated\\_Resource\\_Plan/2015IRP/PacifiCorp\\_2015IRP-Vol1-MainDocument.pdf](http://www.pacificorp.com/content/dam/pacificorp/doc/Energy_Sources/Integrated_Resource_Plan/2015IRP/PacifiCorp_2015IRP-Vol1-MainDocument.pdf) (last accessed September 15, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Application pages 7-8; Clements, Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Application, pages 8-9; Clements, pages 10-13 and 21-22.

<sup>8</sup> Application, pages 11-13; Clements, pages 15-20.

57 It also seems likely that severe system reliability issues could arise given the intermittent,  
58 non-dispatchable nature of much of the current QF development.

59

60 **Q. Please outline your testimony.**

61 A. I will discuss the Division's viewpoint concerning the issues raised by the Company as well  
62 as consider some questions and issues not raised by the Company in the direct testimony  
63 filed by Mr. Clements. First I will discuss the potential for massive inclusion of non-  
64 dispatchable renewable energy on the Company's system and preliminary ramifications of  
65 that potential. Then, I will discuss the hedging issue brought up by Mr. Clements. Next, I will  
66 discuss the question of renewable project financing and the possibility of future renewable  
67 QF development in Utah should the Commission adopt the Company's proposal. Finally, I  
68 will briefly discuss the recent Idaho commission order which established a two-year term for  
69 QF contracts as well as discuss some additional items.

70

71 **II. POTENTIAL RENEWABLE GENERATION CAPACITY IN THE**  
72 **PRICING QUEUE**

73

74 **Q. Please briefly describe the issue related to the amount of potential capacity in the**  
75 **Company's pricing queue.**

76 A. In its Application and the direct testimony of Mr. Clements, the Company indicates that "The  
77 Company currently has 1,041 megawatts<sup>9</sup> ("MW") of existing PURPA contracts in Utah and  
78 2,253 MW of proposed PURPA contracts in Utah, together totaling 3,294 MW of nameplate

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<sup>9</sup> Unless specifically noted, values in my testimony are rounded to the nearest full MW.

79 capacity. The 3,294 MW of existing and proposed PURPA contracts in Utah at their  
80 nameplate capacity would be enough to supply 111 percent of the Company's average Utah  
81 retail load...."<sup>10</sup>

82

83 **Q. If much of this potential capacity is actually built, what does the Division believe will be**  
84 **the ultimate effect on ratepayer prices?**

85 A. The Division can only speculate at this time. However, it seems likely that an obligation for  
86 the Company to purchase such a large amount of additional energy and capacity through QF  
87 projects would mean that the Company may have to idle much of its existing fleet during  
88 certain times of the day, keep some of it running as back-up and balancing reserves for the  
89 intermittent wind and solar resources, and sell excess power into the wholesale markets,  
90 possibly at unfavorable prices. It does not appear to the Division likely to create an  
91 efficiently operating electric service system.

92

93 **Q. Won't lower avoided cost prices ultimately create a ceiling on the amount of QF energy**  
94 **that will be offered to PacifiCorp?**

95 A. Yes. However, at this time it is unknown how much potential capacity might be realized  
96 before low prices completely discourage the creation of new supply. The problem with  
97 predicting at what point new supply of QF energy might cease is that there are a number of  
98 moving parts. Besides the avoided cost prices offered by the utility, there are large  
99 government subsidies that have no direct connection to the actual supply and demand for

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<sup>10</sup> Clements, page 2.

100 electricity that make up a large part of QF economics. Second, the Division understands that  
101 the cost of new QF plant is trending downwards. Finally, there are new financing  
102 opportunities that are opening up new sources of financing for these projects at potentially  
103 reduced costs. All of this is happening within the environment of Federal law mandating that  
104 utilities purchase all of the power generated by QFs.

105

106 **Q. Didn't the Division and other parties successfully recommend to the Commission**  
107 **amendments to Schedule 38 in Docket No. 14-035-140 that had the intent of gaining**  
108 **more control over the pricing queue and to reduce the number of projects in the queue?**

109 A. Yes, that was part of the purpose behind the amendments to Schedule 38. The hope, in part,  
110 was that speculators and those with otherwise unviable projects would be discouraged from  
111 holding positions in the queue for long periods of time: i.e. developers are required to either  
112 move forward with their projects in a timely fashion, or release their position in the queue to  
113 those who are ready to move forward.

114

115 **Q. Have those changes to Schedule 38 had the desired effect?**

116 A. The Division believes that insufficient time has elapsed since the approval of the  
117 recommended changes coming out of Docket No. 14-035-140 to see much of an effect. The  
118 Commission approved the stipulation amending Schedule 38 in an order dated June 9, 2015;  
119 the Commission approved the new capacity contribution values for wind and solar plants in  
120 its order dated June 26, 2015. These orders came out approximately a month or more after  
121 the Company filed its Application in this docket. The Division believes that it will take



122 several months following the issuance of those orders to see whether or not the changes are  
123 having any effect on QF development. The Division notes too, that there are other significant  
124 forces at play such as the December 31, 2016 deadline for QF operations after which the  
125 federal subsidies will be reduced that may confound attempts to definitively determine the  
126 effects of the changes to Schedule 38 on the number of projects in the pricing queue.

127

### 128 **III. HEDGING WITH RENEWABLE QFs**

129

#### 130 **Q. What is the issue with long-term renewable contracts and hedging?**

131 A. The Company, correctly, observes that it does not generally hedge beyond 36 months.

132 Indeed, in what is referred to as the Hedging Collaborative, the Company, regulators, and

133 interested parties agreed to general rules that the Company would follow in its natural gas

134 and electricity hedging program, which included the 36 month limit.<sup>11</sup> Briefly, the Company

135 enters into contracts as part of its hedging program in order to stabilize prices and assure

136 supply at stable prices. While not rejecting the claimed benefits of hedging outright, the

137 parties in the Hedging Collaborative believed that the Company was previously hedging too

138 much of its expected future needs too far out into the future (at the time the Company said it

139 was going out 48 months). The result of the Hedging Collaborative, was an agreement to

140 reduce the maximum time to 36 months and reduce the percentage of expected needs that

141 could be hedged out to 36 months.

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<sup>11</sup> The Company may seek Commission approval to enter into specific longer-term agreements when it appears to be in the public interest to do so. Any longer-term hedges count toward the hedging limits imposed under the Hedging Collaborative Agreement. So far, the Company has sought approval one time in Docket No. 12-035-102.

142

143 To the extent that a fixed-price twenty-year contract is viewed as a price hedge, the term is  
144 clearly far beyond what parties and regulators considered reasonable in other contexts.

145 Furthermore, as described above there are limits imposed on the total percentage of future  
146 needs that the Company may hedge. Under PURPA as it is presently written, there is no limit  
147 on the amount of QF energy a utility must purchase. This situation is also inconsistent with  
148 the principles espoused in the Hedging Collaborative to limit the amount of long-term  
149 hedging to a fraction of the Company's anticipated need.

150

151 **Q. Does the Division believe that twenty-year contracts constitute a hedge that is in the**  
152 **public interest?**

153 A. No. As described above, the Company correctly points out that a twenty-year contract is  
154 generally inconsistent with the hedging principles agreed upon in the Hedging Collaborative  
155 as representing reasonable hedging practices by the Company.

156

157 **Q. Are there possible justifications for twenty-year QF contracts?**

158 A. Yes. There may be justifications for twenty-year contracts that are not necessarily tied to  
159 hedging. The justifications would likely revolve around public policy that determined that  
160 twenty-year contracts were in the public interest, probably by legislative determination. (An  
161 example of current legislative guidance related to renewable energy is set forth in Utah Code  
162 Ann. §54-17-602). For example, it might be determined that Utah must acquire a certain

163 amount of renewable resources, and that the best way to acquire those resources was to enter  
164 into twenty-year contracts.

165

166 **Q. So, the Division does not consider a twenty-year QF contract to be a price or supply**  
167 **hedge that is in the public interest, is that correct?**

168 A. That is correct. There may be other public policy reasons for allowing, or even encouraging,  
169 twenty-year contracts, but the Division does not believe that they can be reasonably  
170 considered a good example of electricity price or supply hedging.

171

172 **Q. The Division has not opposed the twenty-year contract terms to this point, do you have**  
173 **a comment on that?**

174 A. The Division has understood in the past that start-up renewable resource projects required  
175 price certainty for an extended period (e.g. twenty years) in order to attract financing. The  
176 twenty-year contract necessitates a forecast of future avoided costs by the Company for  
177 twenty years, which is all but certain to be wrong, even after a year or two, and consequently  
178 puts ratepayers at price risks they may not otherwise have been faced with. This means that  
179 ratepayers may not be indifferent to the term for renewable QF contracts. The Division  
180 considers the current twenty-year contract term to clearly benefit renewable QF developers  
181 and is a concession to a strict ratepayer indifference standard. At the time this concession was  
182 made, there was no expectation that there would be large amounts of renewable energy  
183 coming into the system via renewable QFs. Indeed, relatively little renewable QF energy has  
184 been developed in Utah for sale to PacifiCorp until the last two years or so, and most of that

185 is still under construction. With this contract term concession to strict ratepayer indifference,  
186 the Division increased its focus and concern about keeping ratepayers indifferent regarding  
187 the other characteristics of a QF contract: specifically that the pricing does not exceed the  
188 best estimate of the avoided cost of the Company at the time the contract was entered into;  
189 and that the QF developer make some showing within a reasonable time after the execution  
190 of the contract or Commission approval that the project is a real, viable project that the  
191 Company and ratepayers can rely on to come online in a reasonable time.

192

193 Given the changing circumstances highlighted by the Company in its Application, the  
194 Division believes that it is time to reconsider the previous positions related to the term of the  
195 QF contracts given the changes in the amount of renewable QF projects potentially coming  
196 online including the potential changes in financing discussed briefly below.

197

198

#### 199 **IV. PROJECT FINANCING**

200

201 **Q. Does the Division understand that one objection to reducing the QF contract term**  
202 **much below the current twenty-year term is that that will make it difficult, if not**  
203 **impossible, for any further renewable QF development to occur in Utah?**

204 A. The Division understands and expects that that will be one of the objections to reducing the  
205 term of QF contracts. Indeed, Mr. Clements in his direct testimony discusses the Idaho  
206 experience where the Idaho commission reduced the QF term to five years in the late 1990s  
207 and saw little QF activity thereafter. The Idaho commission subsequently raised the term

208 back to twenty years in 2002.<sup>12</sup> In its latest decision, briefly discussed below, the Idaho  
209 Commission reduced the term to two years over the objections of parties who claimed that  
210 developers would not be able to get financing.

211

212 **Q. Does the Division believe this is a valid objection?**

213 A. No. While there may be valid public policy reasons why such a result should be avoided, the  
214 Division is unaware of any statute or regulation that requires that the Commission ensure that  
215 QF projects are economically viable, or that a certain number QF projects be successfully  
216 developed. In Docket No. 12-035-100, certain parties raised the issue of the economic  
217 viability (which broadly would also include the ability to obtain financing). The Division  
218 responded that "...the Division believes that it is not the regulators' place to ensure that  
219 economic success is likely. The Division's position is that the avoided cost pricing that a  
220 WQF [wind QF] receives should be high enough such that ratepayers are indifferent between  
221 obtaining power from the WQF versus other available resources, but the price should be no  
222 higher than that."<sup>13</sup> The Division in that case also quoted from Dr. Bonbright's treatise  
223 regarding the use of utility rates to effect social policy:

224 "..."public utility rates are ineffective instruments by which to  
225 minimize inequalities in income distribution and that alternative  
226 instruments . . . are better designed to accomplish this objective. . . ."

227

228 American rate making has adhered in the main to the standard of  
229 service at cost," which in this case is an avoided cost to which the rate  
230 payer is indifferent, "and that even most departures therefrom have

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<sup>12</sup> Clements, page 8.

<sup>13</sup> Pre-filed Rebuttal Testimony of Charles E. Peterson, Docket No. 12-035-100 (Phase I), December 7, 2012, page 3.

231                   been due to administrative, historical, and business reasons rather than  
232                   'social' reasons.<sup>14</sup>  
233  
234

235           The Division believes Dr. Bonbright's comments continue to be applicable. It remains the  
236           Division's position that it is not the regulator's place to ensure economic viability of a QF  
237           project or, absent a legislative mandate, to implement social policy.  
238

239   **Q. Does the Division agree, though, that significantly reducing the contract term will make**  
240   **it difficult or impossible for renewable QF developers to obtain financing to build their**  
241   **projects?**

242   A. The Division does not necessarily disagree with that assertion since it has been, essentially,  
243   the "received wisdom" for a number of years, and this claim was brought up in the Idaho  
244   case briefly discussed below. However, the ability to finance will depend in part on who the  
245   developer is and what the purpose of the QF is. For example, bottoming cycle or other co-  
246   generation facilities at industrial plants and non-renewable QFs will likely be unaffected by  
247   any contract term reduction. Similarly, QF developments funded by municipalities will  
248   probably not be affected since they are doing QF projects, presumably, as a matter of the  
249   municipalities' public policy and without profit motive.  
250

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<sup>14</sup> James C. Bonbright, Principles of Public Utility Rates (New York: Columbia University Press, 1961), republished on the web (July 2005): <http://www.terry.uga.edu/bonbright/publications> , pages 30 and 115.

251 Developers who are independent companies in business to develop new green field  
252 renewable resources and sell the output to a utility for a significant return on investment are  
253 most likely to be effected by any change in the term of the contract. But even with them, the  
254 situation may be changing with the rise of very large developers presumably with their own  
255 considerable financing arrangements and capabilities, and new financing vehicles that are  
256 becoming available.

257

258 **Q. Could you give some idea about what new financing vehicles you are referring to?**

259 A. Specifically there is a type of financing vehicle that is being used by renewable energy  
260 developers referred to as the “yieldco,” which is short for “yield” (or dividend paying)  
261 company. In a yieldco a number of renewable energy and, perhaps, other projects are  
262 bundled into a company and a portion of the stock is sold to the public. The net cash flows  
263 from energy projects are used to invest in new projects for the yieldco in order to grow  
264 dividends and to pay current dividends to the yieldco shareholders. While the yieldco  
265 structure is somewhat like a master limited partnership between the sponsoring developer and  
266 the public shareholders, the purpose is to raise money for the developer and to lower the cost  
267 of capital. The need for a yieldco to constantly acquire new projects will, potentially, create  
268 demand for projects which have, individually, different characteristics and terms. The  
269 following links provide new additional details on yieldcos (last accessed September 11,  
270 2015):

271 <http://social.csptoday.com/markets/what-yieldco-finance-can-do-solar-industry>

272  
273 <http://about.bnef.com/blog/mccrone-liebreich-yieldcos-two-big-questions/>

274  
275 <http://ipu.msu.edu/surfa/presentations/2015/Dumoulin-Smith%20SURFA%20Pres%20-%202015.pdf>

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281

<https://financere.nrel.gov/finance/content/deeper-look-yieldco-structuring>

[http://blog.rmi.org/blog\\_2013\\_07\\_17\\_a\\_rock\\_that\\_churns\\_out\\_cash\\_solar\\_yieldcos](http://blog.rmi.org/blog_2013_07_17_a_rock_that_churns_out_cash_solar_yieldcos)

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/tomkonrad/2014/07/16/clean-energy-yield-cos-growing-pains/>

282

283 Another type of funding is “crowdfunding.” Whereby a developer solicits funds directly from  
284 large numbers of people, typically over the internet. More information on crowdfunding can  
285 be found at the following sites (last accessed September 11, 2015):

286

[http://blog.rmi.org/blog\\_2013\\_03\\_6\\_Other\\_Peoples\\_Money](http://blog.rmi.org/blog_2013_03_6_Other_Peoples_Money)

287

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crowdfunding>

288

289 Finally, some developers may be achieving a size and stability whereby they can obtain  
290 favorable financing through traditional bond and stock issuances based more on the size and  
291 reputation of the company and not so much on any particular project. For example, in its  
292 latest SEC Form 10-Q, SunEdison, Inc. lists its total assets at \$17.5 billion as of June 30,  
293 2015, which places it in the top 500 largest publicly traded companies as measured by  
294 assets.<sup>15</sup>

295

296 **Q. Has the Division supported QF Developers getting favorable terms in their contracts?**

297

A. Yes. In several ways. For example, in recently approved solar QFs the Division

298

recommended that PacifiCorp make methodological changes that increased the avoided

299

costs. The Division was prepared to recommend contract amendments that would have

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.sec.gov/Archives/edgar/data/945436/000094543615000216/suned-630201510q.htm>

Asset size ranking based upon the online data base maintained by Value Line of approximately 6,000 publicly traded companies. Last accessed September 11, 2015.



300 increased prices if the developers were willing to delay the contract approvals while the  
301 amendments were made (they were not). Those changes are expected to be implemented  
302 going forward.

303

304 The Division has also taken a position favorable to renewable QF developers by advocating  
305 that the QF keep renewable energy credits (RECs, or “green tags”) unless PacifiCorp  
306 explicitly negotiates the acquisition of those RECs from the QF. This serves to keep the  
307 environmental attributes with the QF developer who can then benefit from whatever  
308 additional value those attributes may have. The Commission accepted the Division’s  
309 position, which was also advocated by renewable developers and their supporters, in Docket  
310 No. 12-035-100.<sup>16</sup>

311

## 312 **V. IDAHO DECISION**

313

314 **Q. The Idaho Public Service Commission recently issued a decision on QF terms; what is**  
315 **your understanding of that decision?**

316 A. Because I am not an attorney, my comments are not made as legal analysis or legal  
317 interpretation. Idaho utility companies Idaho Power, Avista, and PacifiCorp recently applied  
318 to the Idaho commission to reduce the term of QF contracts to five years, or less. This is  
319 similar to PacifiCorp’s request in this docket. The three utilities, the commission’s staff and  
320 several large commercial/industrial power and users and some municipalities generally

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<sup>16</sup> PSC Order on Phase II Issues, Docket No. 12-035-100, August 16, 2013, pages 7-12.

321 supported the change. Developers, environmentalist groups, and others opposed the change.  
322 In what appears to have been a fully litigated case, the Idaho commission issued its decision  
323 on August 19, 2015. The Idaho commission determined that twenty-year contracts were no  
324 longer in the public interest and reduced the term to two years.<sup>17</sup>

325  
326

327 **VI. THE DIVISION'S POSITION IN NON-QF MATTERS AND OTHER**  
328 **CONSIDERATIONS**

329  
330

331 **Q. Has the Division supported long-term contracts in other contexts?**

332 A. Yes. The Division has supported electric service agreements (ESA) of up to about seven-year  
333 terms, although somewhat reluctantly. A fairly recent example is the 2006 ESA between  
334 PacifiCorp and Nucor Steel. The agreement was for seven years. While recommending  
335 approval of the agreement, the Division noted that the length of the agreement was longer  
336 than the "Division's policy...to not accept as in the public interest contracts such as these  
337 that are longer than five years; preferring in fact that shorter than five years might be  
338 better."<sup>18</sup> In that 2006 docket the Division went on to state that "one reason for the Division's  
339 position is that a lot of unanticipated events can occur in five years, let alone seven, that  
340 could move the contract from being in the public interest to being outside the public

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<sup>17</sup> The Idaho commission decision can be found at (last accessed September 11, 2015)

[http://www.puc.idaho.gov/fileroom/cases/elec/PAC/PACE1503/ordnotc/20150820FINAL\\_ORDER\\_NO\\_33357.PDF](http://www.puc.idaho.gov/fileroom/cases/elec/PAC/PACE1503/ordnotc/20150820FINAL_ORDER_NO_33357.PDF).

<sup>18</sup> Division of Public Utilities, "Memorandum," Docket No. 06-035-147, page 5.

341 interest.”<sup>19</sup> Similarly, the Office of Consumer Services (then the Committee of Consumer  
342 Services) also has expressed concerns for contracts over five years.<sup>20</sup>

343

344 **Q. Do these concerns in the ESA dockets parallel the QF power purchase agreements?**

345 A. Yes. The fundamental problem with all of these agreements is that, to a greater or lesser  
346 extent, they are based upon forecasts. And the longer the forecast period is, the more likely it  
347 is that the forecast will depart substantially from the reality as it actually occurs. Thus the  
348 longer the forecast period, the more risk ratepayers in particular take on since they ultimately  
349 will likely bear the cost of that departure. This situation is exacerbated under PURPA  
350 because the utility continues to be obligated to purchase all of the power that a QF generates  
351 even when it makes no economic sense (for the utility and ratepayers) to do so.

352

353 Possible Benefits to QF Developers

354

355 **Q. We have discussed that renewable QF Developers may experience difficulty obtaining**  
356 **financing due to a shortened term. But, are there potential benefits to QF Developers**  
357 **from a shortened term?**

358 A. With a twenty-year fixed price contract signed, a QF project is assumed to be able to earn at  
359 least the minimum required return demanded by its investors. But there is an opportunity cost

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Testimony of Philip Hayet, Docket No. 06-035-147, Hearing transcript, December 12, 2006, pages 37, 39-40. The Committee of Consumer Services commented on a five year contract term in Docket No. 04-035-68 in its memorandum dated February 16, 2005 stating that “The proposed five-year contract term is acceptable to the Committee. It is consistent with the Committee’s recommended contract term for the recent US Magnesium special contract (Docket [No.] 03-035-19).”

360 to the QF owner. Specifically, the QF project owner foregoes the chance to earn a higher  
361 return if the market price of its delivered energy increases above the contractual amount.  
362 With a shorter term (e.g. two years in Idaho, or three years under the Company's proposal)  
363 the QF has the opportunity to periodically increase its return, either by re-signing with the  
364 utility at the then avoided cost or to look for higher-valued alternatives such as it might find  
365 selling directly into the spot market, signing a purchased power agreement with another  
366 utility, municipality, or large commercial/industrial energy user, or some combination of the  
367 those or other possibilities. These opportunities should appeal to the entrepreneurial spirit.

368

369 Company Positions in Other Dockets

370 **Q. Has the Company recently taken positions inconsistent with its position in this docket**  
371 **when it was seemingly favorable to the Company to do so?**

372 A. Yes. The Company proposals in the ongoing Docket No. 15-035-61, the Solar Subscriber  
373 program, are in consistent with the Company's proposal here. In its original proposal in the  
374 Solar Subscriber docket, the Company wants to do a power purchase agreement with third  
375 party developer under approximately a twenty-year contract and transfer all risk to ratepayers  
376 generally should the program fail to meet its subscription goals.<sup>21</sup> Thus the Company's  
377 current proposal in the Solar Subscriber docket increases risk to ratepayers and is contrary to  
378 its request for three-year contracts with QF developers here.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Direct Testimony of Paul H. Clements, Docket No. 15-035-61, June 16, 2015, lines 284 and lines 506-508.

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, Clements, Docket No. 15-035-53, pages 14-15.

380 **VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.**  
381

382 **Q. What are your conclusions?**

383 A. There has been a marked change in the landscape regarding renewable resources and QFs  
384 from the time when many of the rules, conditions, or expectations for QF contracts were  
385 put in place. The Company's Application in this docket highlights these changes. Many of  
386 the issues were previously grappled with by parties and the Commission in Docket No. 14-  
387 035-140. The changes made to Schedule 38 along with the updates in the capacity  
388 contribution values are expected to resolve some of the problems cited by the Company,  
389 but probably not enough time has elapsed to tell if those changes are going to result in an  
390 improvement. Also, because the federal production tax credits are scheduled to go away or  
391 be reduced after December 31, 2016, it is likely that we are seeing significantly increased  
392 activity due to that deadline. Utah regulators, of course, have no control over Federal tax  
393 policy.

394

395 **Q. Does this mean the Division is against reducing the term of QF contracts?**

396 A. No. The Division agrees with the Company that a twenty-year fixed-price QF contract is  
397 not an acceptable price hedge. The length of the contracts increases price risk to ratepayers.  
398 In other, at least tangentially similar, types of contracts the Division has consistently taken  
399 the position that contracts terms, without contract specific extenuating circumstances,  
400 should be five years or less.

401

402 Given that the neither the Company nor regulators have control over the QF and that the  
403 QF keeps the environmental attributes represented by RECs, QF projects may not be an  
404 effective hedge for the Company or ratepayers against changing environmental regulations.

405

406 The Division, however, believes that the three-year term limit proposed by the Company is  
407 lower than the Division believes is necessary to satisfactorily mitigate the Division's  
408 concerns.

409

410 **Q. What is the Division's recommendation?**

411 A. The Division recommends that the Commission adopt a five-year contract term limit for  
412 QFs, but with the express provision that a party may propose a longer term if it can show  
413 that the longer term is in the public interest under the specific circumstances of a QF  
414 contract being brought before the Commission.

415

416 For purposes of determining a capacity payment for a five-year contract, the Division is  
417 willing to accept the assumption that the QF will renew its contract through twenty years of  
418 service. In other words, energy prices would be calculated as they are now, but just for the  
419 next five years; but any capacity payments would be set exactly the way they are now  
420 based on the present value of the future deferred plant capacity over the next twenty years.  
421 This proposal could be viewed as a twenty-year contract with a price reopener every five  
422 years, but giving the QF the option every five years to seek higher prices elsewhere.

423

424           The Division does not foreclose that there may be alternative solutions to the issues raised  
425           in this docket. In that regard, the Division may modify its recommendation if other  
426           workable solutions become apparent.

427

428   **Q.   Does this conclude your testimony?**

429   A.   Yes.