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Oregon approves PacifiCorp wind request for proposals

By [Kelly Andrejasich](#)

[PacifiCorp](#) is making progress on plans to issue a request for proposals, or RFP, for up to 1,270 MW of new wind resources after getting approval to do so from Oregon utility regulators.

The Oregon Public Utility Commission on Aug. 29 signed off on the RFP but stressed that approval of the request is not indicative of whether regulators will ultimately acknowledge an [integrated resource plan](#), or IRP, currently under review. Staff of the PUC had [recommended](#) that the commission deny the RFP and review whether the resources are justified in the IRP case.

Commissioner Stephen Bloom said he appreciated that and similar viewpoints but said circumstances warranted "limited approval" of the request.

"I don't want staff to think we're ignoring their report or ignoring the IRP process, which we shouldn't do, but I think this is a special circumstance and that's the only reason I'm going along with the limited approval," he said.

Bloom said if the IRP is not acknowledged, then the RFP would be moot. A final commission order has not yet been issued.

The special circumstance Bloom pointed to is PacifiCorp's desire to issue the RFP in order to take advantage of expiring production tax credits for wind.

In its [pitch](#) to the Oregon PUC, PacifiCorp, which does business in the state as Pacific Power, said proposed wind resources would be procured in conjunction with a new 140-mile, 500-kV [transmission line](#) and associated infrastructure running from the new Aeolus substation near Medicine Bow, Wyo., to a new annex substation, Bridger/Anticline, which will be located near the existing Jim Bridger substation.

"The transmission project is necessary to relieve existing congestion and will enable interconnection and integration of the proposed wind resources into

PacifiCorp's transmission system," the company said. "The proposed wind projects, when combined with the transmission project, are expected to provide economic benefits for PacifiCorp's customers." (Oregon PUC Docket No. UM 1845) PacifiCorp wants to seek new wind resources with a project size of at least 20 MW and will have a commercial operation date of no later than Dec. 31, 2020. The company will ask developers to submit proposals to either build projects and turn them over to PacifiCorp or build, own and operate them under long-term power purchase agreements. PacifiCorp also intends to bid self-build, or "benchmark," resources into the RFP.

Projects must be capable of interconnecting with the company's Wyoming transmission system inclusive of the Gateway West transmission project.

PacifiCorp had planned to issue the RFP on Aug. 31, but that has been pushed back a bit while the company awaits word from the Utah Public Service Commission.

Regulators in Utah asked the company, which does business in that state as Rocky Mountain Power, to file more information. PacifiCorp is due to make that filing on Aug. 31. Other interested parties have until Sept. 13 to respond and a hearing is set for Sept. 19. (Utah Docket No. 17-035-23)

PacifiCorp remains on track to issue the RFP soon after that, said spokesman Bob Gravely. The company also aims to sign potential contracts in the spring of 2018.

Gravely said the Oregon PUC decision is a good step forward.

"They essentially approved us going out with the RFP to test the market to see what would be the most cost-effective way to add this additional wind," he said.