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July 7, 2026

DECISION MEMORANDUM

TO: Council members

FROM: Jennifer Light
Director of Power Planning

SUBJECT: Final review and possible decision to release draft Ninth Power Plan for public review and comment

PROPOSED ACTION: Staff will review revisions to a working draft of the Council's draft Ninth Northwest Power Plan. Following that discussion, staff will incorporate any suggested changes. If the Council completes its review at the meeting, staff recommend that the Council vote to release the draft Ninth Power Plan for public review and comment.

SIGNIFICANCE: Under the Northwest Power Act, the Council is required to review its power plan no less frequently than once every five years. The Council initiated its review of the power plan in February 2025, with a goal of developing a final power plan by the end of 2026. The Council decision to release a draft for review and comment is an important milestone in the process to adopt an updated power plan.

BACKGROUND

Under the Northwest Power Act, the Council is required to put together a regional conservation and electric power plan and to revise that plan no less frequently than once every five years. The Council's current power plan, the 2021 Power Plan, was adopted by the Council in February 2022. Given the dynamic changes in the power system, the Council officially initiated review of the power plan in February of 2025, well in advance of the five-year requirement.

While the official review of the power plan started in February of last year, preparation of the Ninth Plan started even earlier. In spring of 2024, the Council released an issue paper on the Preparation of the Ninth Plan to solicit feedback from the region to inform the scoping of the Plan. The Power Division staff also began preparing data and models, including a new long-term load forecast (Itron) and regional capital expansion (OptGen) models. These models provided the ability for the Council to analyze the region at a zonal level (17 zones).

In spring and summer of 2025, the power division prepared long-term load forecast, estimates of new resource potential and costs, and a suite of other cross-cutting assumptions to inform power system planning. With modeling inputs complete, the Council initiated scenario modeling for the draft Ninth Power Plan. This included conducting market availability studies, regional needs assessments, and an in-region resource optimization across multiple sensitivities. The scenario modeling was completed in early spring of 2026, at which time the Council analyzed the results and began developing recommendations for inclusion in the draft Ninth Power Plan. The Council has also worked through several iterations of draft language for the draft Power Plan.

Based on all the work to date, staff believe the Council is close to a decision to release the draft Ninth Power Plan. The Council is scheduled for discussion and possible decision to release the draft for public review on July 14. If the Council reaches a decision to release the draft, staff recommend that the comment period be closed on October 2, 2026. This allows at least a 74-day public comment period. The Council may opt for a longer or shorter public comment period.

Following the decision of the Council to release a draft Ninth Power Plan, staff will publish the draft on the Council's website, circulate notice of the draft, schedule public hearings, and begin to receive written public comments through its website. This will provide a valuable period for the Council to continue conversations around the draft Power Plan. The Council will use the public comment to make necessary revisions to ensure the final Ninth Power Plan provides for an adequate, efficient, economic, and reliable power supply.

ALTERNATIVES

If the Council is not yet ready, the Council can hold off on release of the draft Ninth Power Plan until a later meeting. The next Council meeting is currently scheduled for August 11-12. The Council may opt for a longer or shorter public comment period, such as a 60-day period ending on September 18 or a 90-day period ending on October 16.

ATTACHMENTS

The proposed final draft of the Ninth Power Plan will be provided to the Council members and staff prior to the meeting.