



Annual Report of the Oregon Citizens' Utility Board

December 2020

Despite the immense challenges of 2020, CUB has won significant victories for Oregonians. CUB's 10th Energy Policy Conference moved online and featured Governor Kate Brown. Our staff tirelessly challenged rate hikes, advocated in the legislature, and crafted landmark COVID-19 consumer protections. This year also marked the closing of Boardman, the only coal plant in Oregon. **All this work would not be possible without CUB members and your advocacy and financial support.**

For a complete list of this year's accomplishments and more information about these updates, visit bit.ly/CUBmilestones.

CUB Shapes Oregon Public Utility Commission (PUC) Response to COVID-19

CUB's Energy Utility Customer Protection Plan shaped the PUC's thinking during its summer investigation of COVID-19 customer impacts. PUC Commissioner Mark Thompson characterized the release of our plan as a "watershed moment" in that investigation and for PUC decision making. This fall, the PUC endorsed historic agreements to protect energy, water, and telecommunications utility customers.

A few of the essential protections CUB secured for energy utility customers are:

- A freeze on service disconnections until at least April of 2021
- Nearly \$40 million to forgive customers' past-due balances
- Increased funding for low-income bill payment assistance
- Long-term, flexible repayment options for customers
- Suspension of customer security deposits and various fees through at least October of 2022

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In 2020, four of the six major utilities in Oregon filed general rate cases. Particularly weighty were those filed by NW Natural Gas and Pacific Power.

NW Natural Gas, Oregon's largest natural gas provider, sought an 11.5 percent rate increase in 2020. After much negotiation and CUB pushback, the company agreed to a 7.37 percent increase, saving customers nearly \$25.6 million. CUB commends NW Natural for working in good faith to reduce its rate increase in light of the economic turmoil brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Despite the economic impacts of COVID-19, **Pacific Power** proposed to raise Oregon rates by \$78 million, including adding the cost of retrofitting coal plants and a \$12 million boost to the profit margin of its corporate parent, Berkshire Hathaway. CUB won an agreement to keep the fixed part of customer bills the same at \$9.50 per month and is challenging much of the increase. CUB expects a final PUC decision late in 2020.

CUB Welcomes New Staff and Board Personnel:

Amanda (Marti) Martino
Charlotte Shuff
Thomas Jerin



In May, CUB was pleased to welcome our newest board member representing District 2, **Amanda (Marti) Martino**. Marti is the Conservation Director for Blue Mountain Land Trust.



In April, CUB welcomed **Charlotte Shuff** as Membership Organizer. In this new position, Charlotte will be expanding and deepening outreach, grassroots campaigns, and membership.



In October, CUB welcomed **Thomas Jerin** as our new Legal Assistant / Office Manager. Thomas will support CUB's regulatory team and handle office manager duties.

Boardman Coal Plant Shutters

On October 15, the only coal plant in Oregon, Boardman, closed for good. This major milestone began in 2008 with CUB’s innovative analysis that led to a “close in ten years” agreement in 2010. Before this significant victory, no utility had ever agreed to close a modern coal plant. With allies, CUB created a plan for PGE to close the plant instead of investing in a \$500 million air quality retrofit. PGE deserves credit for making the right decision, despite industry pressures to continue the use of coal. CUB staff celebrated by (virtually) raising a glass to this major achievement.



CUB Boosts Connectivity for Oregon Telephone and Internet Customers

In June, Oregon’s legislative Emergency Board approved CUB’s proposal to allocate 3.5 million federal pandemic response dollars to boost the Oregon Telephone Assistance Program. This increase offers economic relief and digital connectivity to help Oregonians stay connected while stuck at home.

In its first special session last summer, the Legislature passed the CUB-backed Rural Telecommunications Investment Act, which will add up to \$5 million a year for new high-speed internet service infrastructure and grants for rural Oregon communities.

Executive Order 20-04 on Climate

After an opposition walkout blocked cap and trade legislation to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, Governor Kate Brown issued Executive Order 20-04. This is a strong order that builds on the work of CUB and other stakeholders to ensure that Oregon meets scientifically based goals to address climate change. CUB is a vital player in EO 20-04 implementation, particularly in our work with the PUC and the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality. CUB will also work with these agencies on addressing two of our major implementation priorities: energy burden and equity.

10th Anniversary Policy Conference Looks for Hope Amid Crisis



The 10th annual CUB Energy Policy Conference, *Finding Hope: Improving Our Energy Systems in the Age of COVID-19*, moved online this year. The October 16 event opened with Governor Brown and brought together leaders from utilities, state agencies, and advocates to discuss how to emerge from the COVID-19 and wildfire crises with a more sustainable, robust, and equitable utility system. In a year of turmoil, CUB’s Executive Director Bob Jenks identified signs of hope in his opening remarks. Conference conversations reflected the challenges of 2020 and opportunities for energy and utility policy improvements.

Thank You Donors

In 2020, our supporters stepped up to record levels and made these successes possible.

Whether you are a member giving \$5 or \$500, we thank you.

CUB Staff Serve as Policy Experts

CUB staff expertise is a major organizational strength that is recognized beyond our office. For example, in 2020 our staff participated in the following committees and conference panels:

- CUB General Counsel, Mike Goetz:** Resource Advocacy Steering Committee convened by the Northwest Power and Conservation Council; Clean Fuels Program Rulemaking Advisory Committee convened by the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality
- CUB Economist, Will Gehrke:** Elected by public interest and consumer advocacy groups to a customer advocate seat on the Regional Issues Forum, convened by the California Independent System Operator, regarding its management of the Energy Imbalance Market
- CUB Executive Director, Bob Jenks:** Annual conference of the National Association of State Utility Consumer Advocates, where Bob spoke on protecting consumers in a state (Oregon) with a strong decarbonization commitment
- CUB Advocacy and Development Manager, Sam Pastrick:** Broadband panel at the Oregon League of Cities annual conference

FY 2020 Expenditures

