Service Date: March 18, 2022

STATE OF WASHINGTON

UTILITIES AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

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March 18, 2022

NOTICE OF RECESSED OPEN MEETING
(Set for Wednesday, April 27, 2022, at 1:30 p.m.)

Re: In the Matter of Utility Wildfire Preparedness, Docket U-210254

TO ALL INTERESTED PERSONS:

On May 26, 2021, the Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission (Commission) convened a recessed open meeting to hear from Washington state's regulated electric utilities about plans for the 2021 wildfire season. Presentations from Avista Corporation d/b/a Avista Utilities (Avista), Puget Sound Energy (PSE), and PacifiCorp d/b/a Pacific Power & Light (Pacific Power) included information on the utilities' fire mitigation strategies and communication plans with state, federal, and local emergency response agencies, and the public.

Because each of the three electric utilities' service territories contain fire risk areas, the Commission believes it would be informative to wildfire mitigation and public safety efforts to hold a similar pre-fire season Open Meeting to discuss utility preparedness for the 2022 season. The Commission intends to hear from regulated electric utilities about their 2022 wildfire preparation efforts at a recessed open meeting on April 27, 2022, from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

The Commission's understanding of utility wildfire risk and planning would be aided by submission in this docket of the utilities' written wildfire preparedness plans for 2022. Receiving these plans would allow Commission Staff to perform a more thorough review of utility efforts and determine if or where additional Commission guidance could be helpful or necessary.

Accordingly, the Commission requires Avista, Pacific Power, and Puget Sound Energy to file updated plans for wildfire mitigation and response for the 2022 wildfire season in this docket by April 15, 2022. The Commission further asks that Avista, Pacific Power, and Puget Sound Energy respond to or address the following questions in their plans, or by separate filing if not included in current plans:

1. Please provide a synopsis of the utility's experience with the 2021 fire season. Please identify the fire events that happened in your service territory, the location of those events, and how much damage to utility infrastructure and local communities occurred, if any.

2. How is the utility identifying areas of greatest wildfire risk within its service territory? Where are those areas located?
    - What data is being used in this analysis?
    - What modeling is the utility using to predict periods of heightened wildfire risk based on high winds or other factors contributing to the sparking or spread of wildfire?
    - What strategies is the utility using to mitigate risk in each of its service territory risk areas? Do those strategies change during times of heightened wildfire risk?

3. What lessons, if any, did the utility learn in the 2021 wildfire season, and how have these lessons changed plans for the 2022 wildfire season, if at all?

4. Is the utility aware of best practices for utility wildfire mitigation implemented in other jurisdictions? Please identify these best practices, the source of these best practices, and any steps the utility is taking to incorporate these best practices into its own wildfire mitigation practices.

5. What local, state, federal, or other privately funded research, pilots, or programs exploring emerging wildfire mitigation technologies or best practices are you participating in?

6. What vegetation management strategies and actions are you taking to mitigate the risk and potential impact of wildfire in your service territory for 2022?
    - How do these actions differ, if at all, from business-as-usual vegetation management practices? What changes, if any, has the utility identified or made for the 2022 wildfire season compared to the 2021 fire season?
    - Is the utility prioritizing vegetation management according to areas of greatest risk? If so, please describe.
    - What technical methods (aerial, on-the-ground, etc.) does the utility use to inspect vegetation near its equipment throughout its service territory. What is the frequency of vegetation inspections?

7. How is the utility considering infrastructure hardening in its wildfire mitigation plans for 2022?
    - What infrastructure hardening strategies have been identified for the utility's system, including areas at higher risk for fire?

- How do these strategies compare to peer West Coast utilities with similar service territory characteristics?
- How often does the utility inspect its infrastructure, particularly in areas of heightened fire risk? What type of inspections are performed (aerial, on-the-ground, etc.)?
- How are planned grid hardening activities being balanced or coordinated with vegetation management activities? How is general maintenance of infrastructure being balanced or considered in tandem with wildfire-related infrastructure hardening?

8. What strategies will the utility use or explore for this wildfire season to enhance situational awareness for utility operations and for its customers?
    - What information, datasets, or programs, such as those compiled and managed by federal agencies like NOAA, does the utility have at its disposal to enhance situational awareness? What new technologies such as enhanced weather forecasting or LIDAR scans of transmission lines are you using to prepare for the wildfire season?
    - Are there specific deficiencies in information that the utility plans to address to prepare for this wildfire season? What information deficiencies are challenging for the utility to address or resolve on its own?
    - What partnerships has the utility cultivated with first responders, land managers, and emergency operations personnel in preparing for the 2022 wildfire season?
    - What communication channels and procedures are in place to coordinate planning and response efforts with these entities?
    - What plans does the utility have in place to communicate with customers, including highly impacted communities, vulnerable populations, and medically vulnerable customers, about wildfire risk for this season overall, as well as specific wildfire risks or events?
    - What information will the utility provide customers about the wildfire risk mitigation work it is performing? Does the utility offer programs for customers to request vegetation management work if they identify trees or vegetation that is in contact with power lines? How successful are these programs?

9. What operational tools are in the utility's toolkit for responding to wildfire events or potential triggers of wildfire events this season, such as heatwaves or high wind events?
    - Do these tools include public safety power shutoffs or other depowering/de-energization mechanisms such as more sensitive system settings that could trigger a power outage? Please explain any programs that result in customers' power being shut-off proactively or reactively due to fire risk.

        - What are the criteria, triggering events, provisions, or thresholds that would result in a utility implementing any depowering or de-energization mechanism?
        - What communication protocols are in place to notify and prepare customers, first responders, and state and federal emergency operations personnel of such an event? In particular, what are the utility's plans for communicating with medical and life support customers, vulnerable and low-income customers, and customers with limited English proficiency or other language or accessibility needs?
        - If the utility's wildfire mitigation plan includes public safety power shutoffs, what resources does the utility provide to impacted customers to mitigate customer impacts during a shutoff event?
    - If depowering in any form is not part of a utility's toolkit, what provisions are in place as an alternative, specifically in circumstance where high winds and dry conditions are predicted? How does the utility plan to communicate these provisions with customers, including medical and life support customers, vulnerable and low-income customers, and customers with limited English proficiency or other language or accessibility needs?

Please file completed plans and any supplemental information that includes all requested information in Docket UE- 210254 no later than Friday, April 15, 2022.

MEETING PARTICIPATION

Due to the limitations on in-person gatherings during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission will be holding the meeting virtually. Commission headquarters will not be open to the public for in-person participation. Interested persons may listen to the meeting by telephone by calling (253) 215-8782 and using conference ID 958 0327 8833# and Passcode: 350930#. To participate in the meeting via Zoom on a computer or mobile device, please use the following link: Click to Join Meeting. If you wish to be placed on the interested parties contact list, please submit your request to the Commission's Records Center at records@utc.wa.gov.

If you wish to participate and need an interpreter, one will be provided at no cost to you. If you need an interpreter, please contact the Commission at least one business day prior to the meeting by calling (360) 664-1140 or by sending an email to paige.doyle@utc.wa.gov.

The Commission is committed to providing reasonable accommodations to participants with disabilities. If you need a reasonable accommodation for the recessed open meeting, please contact the Commission at least one business day prior to the workshop by calling (360) 664-1132 or by sending an email to human_resources@utc.wa.gov. For TTY service, please call the Washington Relay Service at 1-800-833-6384 or 711.

If you have questions regarding this recessed open meeting, you may contact energy policy advisor Kate Griffith at kate.griffith@utc.wa.gov or (360) 742-2628.

AMANDA MAXWELL,
Executive Director and Secretary