

# Statewide Action Global Change

**What's Inside:** 2025 Legislative Preview

Oregon's Clean Energy Grid | Welcome, New Team Members!






Oregon  
Environmental  
Council

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## Letter From The Executive Director Jana Gastellum

Dear friend of Oregon's environment,

This fall, I visited central, southern, and coastal Oregon to connect with members, supporters and decision-makers about their local environmental realities. In Bend, with smoke in the air, we talked about climate and how wells are running dry. On the coast, we discussed the connection between transportation and housing. In southern Oregon, winery workers and restaurant owners shared their commitments to sustainability.

I was inspired by a business leader's bold commitment to help restore the Climate Protection Program (CPP). "My company used to stay on the sidelines for conversations like these," she said. "But climate change is impacting our business and our workers. We have to get in the game and speak up for progress."

She isn't alone. Every Oregonian is confronting the profound effects of climate change on their lives. Teachers contend with sweltering classroom temperatures and poor air quality; businesses navigate ongoing climate-caused supply chain issues; farmers face water deficits; and parents grapple with tough questions about their children's futures.

**The message is clear: sitting on the sidelines is no longer an option.**

As part of OEC's community, you have joined the growing number of Oregonians willing to step onto the court and fight for the future. The work we do at home – pushing for clean air, abundant water, toxic-free environments, and a livable climate – will always be fundamental, regardless of what happens at a federal level. And for all 56 years we've been at it, it's always been made possible by people like you. Thank you for your vital contributions to our collective mission.

There's never been a more urgent moment to stay engaged, and continue moving toward a brighter tomorrow! **We're in it together.**



With hope,

Jana Gastellum  
Executive Director and proud OEC member

## Preview: The 2025 Legislative Session

OEC has never done what we do alone. Since 1968, our advocacy has revolved around collaboration, and putting our heads together to solve our state's most pressing problems. This upcoming legislative session is all about keeping up the momentum, and continuing to collaborate for real change.

Our partners have made tremendous strides to protect Oregon's environment and communities. In the last year, we've worked with state leaders on restoring the landmark Climate Protection Program, enact future-focused groundwater protection rules, expand the Toxic-Free Kids Act, and engage Oregonians about

transportation priorities. OEC's 2025 legislative agenda seeks to build on these key victories to ensure Oregon stays on track to deliver on environmental policies and programs.

As a multi-issue environmental nonprofit with a 56-year track record of success, OEC is uniquely suited to tackle the broad scope of issues at stake this session. We'll be in Salem from day one until legislators gavel out, speaking up for all Oregonians to ensure a healthy climate, clean and plentiful water, safe and equitable transportation, and protection from environmental toxics.

### OEC's Biggest Priorities in 2025:



#### Transportation

Oregon is falling behind on providing safe, clean, and accessible transportation options for all Oregonians. We're seeking investment in electrification, safer roads, and more affordable transportation options for those unable to drive. The state is already having tough conversations about how to raise more funding equitably and, importantly, *what* to spend it on.



#### Environmental Health

The word is out: PFAS (aka "forever chemicals") are everywhere – from cookware to cosmetics – and they are detrimental to human health. We are pushing for meaningful solutions to reduce sources of PFAS exposure across the state. The EPA is setting new standards and Oregon needs to do more.



#### Climate

This session is all about ensuring Oregon stays on track to achieve its climate goals. We're building on past progress to protect people from growing climate harms, reduce energy use and costs, leverage investments to support local jobs and economies, and remove barriers to meet our clean energy goals.



#### Water

Last September, the Oregon Water Resources Department unanimously approved new groundwater allocation rules that ensure more sustainable groundwater use while protecting existing surface water rights. 2025 is our chance to ensure the monitoring and reporting systems necessary to enforce those rules are properly funded and implemented.



#### Investment

Lasting change requires meaningful investment. Oregon has made important progress to advance policies and programs to protect our environment and communities. To stay on track, the state must ensure these programs are sufficiently funded. Now more than ever, we're working to ensure state agencies are adequately resourced to do their jobs effectively.



### Add impact to your inbox!

Sign up for emails from OEC to stay up-to-date on the latest news and ways to take action.

## Oregon's Complicated History of Groundwater Management



Karen Lewotsky  
Rural Partnerships &  
Water Policy Director

For much of Oregon's history, groundwater was treated like an infinite resource. Aquifers were tapped for agriculture, industry, and drinking water, with little consideration for how (and if) the resource would be replenished.

That mindset shifted in the mid-20th century with the passage of the 1955 Oregon Groundwater Act. This forward-thinking legislation established the first rules and regulations to protect this vital resource, creating permitting requirements and policies to ensure state groundwater levels remained stable. It was a win for sustainability and a necessary step toward long-term groundwater protection.

At least, that's how it read on paper... In 2016, *The Oregonian* published a bombshell series: "Draining Oregon." The investigation revealed how the Oregon Water Resources Department (OWRD) had failed to effectively uphold the standards set by the 1955 Act. By "defaulting to yes" on new groundwater permits

without assessing water availability, the department was failing to protect this vital resource – harming wildlife and communities in the process.

These revelations led the Water Resources Commission to revisit Department rules to deliver on the intent of the 1955 Act. OWRD launched a years-long effort to correct course by changing rules for allocating groundwater to new permittees. Their methodology included conducting a state-wide tour to inform Oregonians, establishing a rulemaking advisory committee to guide OWRD staff on proposed rule revisions, and collecting public comments on the draft rules from Oregonians across the state. OEC was a part of the process every step of the way.

Last September, the Water Resources Commission unanimously voted to update state groundwater allocation practices by adopting the draft rules. The decision ensures more sustainable groundwater use while protecting existing surface water rights and domestic well users.

This reform represents a crucial turning point in Oregon's water management. While we once took groundwater for granted, we now recognize it as a precious, finite resource that requires careful stewardship for future generations.

## Clean Grid 101: The Key to Unlocking the Power of Clean Energy



Nora Apter  
Director of Programs

Moving toward clean energy is a fundamental step in curbing the climate crisis. But to do that, we have to start from the source.

Enter: The electric grid. You've probably heard the term – though you're not alone if you don't know what it really means. Broadly speaking, the grid is the entire interconnected system that moves power from the source to wherever you are, in the form of electricity. It powers everything around us – from our homes and places of work to citywide transit systems.

However, Oregon's energy grid is in desperate need of upgrading – and cleaning up. Some 20,000 miles of power lines in Oregon alone are due to be restrung; it's the perfect opportunity to add energy-carrying capacity to our grid. More transmission networks will also need to be built in order to meet rising energy demands. But perhaps most importantly, burning fossil fuels still makes up a large portion of Oregon's electricity mix. Achieving Oregon's commitment to 100% clean energy will require a strong, updated grid that's equipped to power the state with renewables like wind and solar.

Cleaning up the grid *alone* can get us halfway to our emission reduction goals. Doing so will also take community engagement, technical expertise, and strong collaboration between our interconnected Western states. As a thought leader on clean energy policy, OEC will continue to prioritize the clean grid transition in 2025 and beyond.

### Oregon's Path to Clean Energy:

June 2007:  
**Renewable Energy Act**

**PASSES**

February 2016:  
**Coal to Clean Bill**

**PASSES**

May 2021:  
**100% Clean Energy Bill**

**PASSES**

November 2021:  
**Federal Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act**

**PASSES**

August 2022:  
**Federal Inflation Reduction Act**

**PASSES**

August 2023:  
**Oregon Clean Grid Collaborative**

**FORMED!**

September 2024:  
**First annual Oregon Clean Grid Summit**

**LAUNCHED!**

**More to come!**

## Power in Partnerships

Collaboration is the key to lasting change. Effective solutions are created when diverse voices are represented. That's why OEC is proud to be a part of these groups and coalitions. Together, we're powerful!

**Oregon Water Partnership**  
fights for clean, abundant water for our state's communities and ecosystems.

**Coalition for Climate and Economic Justice**  
brings community leaders and businesses together to protect Oregon from the impacts of climate change.

**Move Oregon Forward**  
is focused on climate-smart transportation solutions that ensure *all* Oregonians can get around safely and equitably.

**Safer States**  
collaborates nationwide to phase out harmful chemicals like PFAS from our products and environments, from coast to coast.

**Building Resilience**  
works to ensure our homes and buildings are healthy, affordable, resilient, and run on clean energy.

### Terms to Know:

#### Western Interconnection

The electric grid connecting Oregon to 11 U.S. states and part of Canada. It's why working together is a must!

#### Transmission

How energy moves from point A to point B. Upgrading and expanding our transmission networks is crucial.

#### Generating Site

The source of the grid's energy – right now 47% fossil fuels. We must accelerate moving to renewable energy sources.

#### Oregon Clean Grid Collaborative

Clean grid-focused coalition founded by OEC and 10+ partner organizations across the state. Launched the first annual Oregon Clean Grid Summit this year!

## Supporter Spotlight: Lesley Atlansky



Longtime OEC supporter, Lesley Atlansky

At Powell's Books on Hawthorne in Portland, hope blooms between the shelves. There, longtime OEC member Lesley Atlansky curates an environmental studies section that challenges the "doom and gloom" narrative of climate literature. As both an artist (see her paintings below!) and environmental advocate, she carefully selects books that balance hard truths with concrete actions and optimism.

I can do is be informed." Recently, she's noticed an encouraging trend: increased interest in environmental literature and a shift toward more solution-focused writing.

Between painting nature-inspired landscapes and coloring comic books, Lesley remains committed to environmental advocacy. Her carefully curated shelves feature underrepresented voices and stories of positive change, from wildlife corridors to coastal preservation projects.

"We can solve this," she says of the environmental challenges we face. "The tenacity that people have for seeing things through is really inspiring."

"Everyone thinks I'm bananas for wanting to read books on climate change," she laughs. "But I just feel like the least

Bend All Your Notes For Me



I am Listening to Hear Where You Are



## A Lasting Gift That Will Forge Lasting Solutions

**Bruce Abernethy, OEC Board Member**

I've had the distinct privilege to serve on the OEC Board since 2016. It's given me not only an insider's look at how the organization works but also an appreciation for how it has evolved over the years to always be at the cutting edge of preserving and fighting for what makes Oregon so special.

What I love about OEC is that while it is focused on the present needs, all of the hard work is actually an investment for the future. OEC knows how to engage and inspire people and forge lasting solutions. That perspective really resonates with me and why I have put OEC in my will.

I don't know exactly how OEC will choose to invest my bequest when that time comes, but I'm confident it will be used to help protect Oregon's water, air, and land and make this a better place to live, work and raise a family.

You can join Bruce as a champion for Oregon's environment by including OEC in your will or other estate plan. Contact Teke Dillender at 503-222-1963 x119 or teked@oeconline.org to learn more.



Bruce Abernethy and Mary Meador

# Meet OEC's New Team Members!

Here's what OEC's new team members had to say when we asked, "What are your biggest hopes for the future of Oregon?"...



**Crystal Weston**, Environmental Health Program Director

"My biggest hope is a future that prioritizes our young people and their future in Oregon. We need to be thinking about what kind of environment we are leaving for the next generations. Our work today must prioritize the world we want to build and give our young people the resources they need to thrive."



**Kristopher Fortin Grijalva**, Transportation Program Director

"I hope to see Oregon fully embrace and empower the rich diversity that already exists here – from our coastal communities to rural towns to urban centers. By recognizing and amplifying these varied experiences, particularly those of people of color and groups that have been historically underrepresented, we can help Oregon evolve into an even more inclusive and vibrant state."



**Max Light-Pacheco**, Community Engagement Manager

"My hope for Oregon's future is to see our state fully reckon with its history of colonization and its impacts on both human communities and natural systems. I envision a future where we deepen our understanding of different communities and address prior harms. By recognizing that we are part of our environment, and our environment is part of us, we can create lasting positive change for all Oregon residents."

## This fall, the OEC Team visited Silver Falls State Park on a staff retreat to rest, connect, and enjoy the autumn beauty.



Check our OEC's Instagram page (@oeconline) for more pics from the adventure!

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- David Lohman, Medford
- Debra Dunn, Eugene
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## Ring in 2025 with a gift for the future!

Give a gift that honors your commitment to our cherished environment and a bright future for Oregon's air, water, communities, and climate. Make your gift by Dec. 31!



**GIVE NOW!**  
**Be a hero for Oregon's environment!**

[oeonline.org/giveforthefuture](https://oeonline.org/giveforthefuture)

### Thank you to our generous supporters!



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