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New Report from Environmental Groups Provides Oregon Developers with Guidelines to Responsibly Site Renewable Energy Projects

Environmental organizations today released a new report, [Siting Renewable Energy in Oregon: Voluntary Guidelines Developed with Outreach and Engagement](#), to help Oregon meet its state clean energy goals, which will require large expansions of renewable energy generation across the state. This report offers guidelines for responsible siting of renewable energy projects to minimize environmental impacts and urges greater community engagement and local benefits throughout the planning and development process.

“We need to reduce carbon emissions quickly to avoid the worst impacts of climate change, but we must also make sure that future renewable energy projects are sited in a way that prevents unintended impacts to wildlife and other resources,” said **Nathan Marcy, senior renewable energy analyst with Defenders of Wildlife**. “This report can be a resource to help Oregon developers, decision-makers and communities plan renewable energy development that is compatible with the state’s other valued land uses. We are grateful for the contributions of the many Oregon stakeholders who helped make this important report possible.”

The report is the product of the Oregon Smart Siting Collaboration (OSSC), a partnership of Defenders of Wildlife, The Natural Resources Defense Council, Oregon Natural Desert Association and Renewable Northwest funded by a grant from the Doris Duke Foundation. The OSSC was developed through consultation with a diverse group of more than 50 interested parties in Oregon, including clean energy advocates, conservation organizations, environmental justice groups, renewable energy developers, state and federal agencies, local government officials, utilities, tribes, community organizations and representatives of agriculture and industry.

“The collaborative approach that this project employed reflects Oregon’s value of citizen participation where communities and all stakeholders are encouraged to share their experiences and opinions to shape decision-making” said **Emily Griffith, strategic engagement manager with Renewable Northwest**. “This type of collaboration will be critical and necessary for minimizing potential conflict and valuing Oregon’s important natural and cultural resources when considering locations for renewable energy facilities.”

The voluntary guidelines encourage developers to minimize impacts by considering a list of eight site characteristics that focus on biodiversity, agricultural value and cultural resources during the siting process. The report highlights several options for siting projects in ways that are consistent with the characteristics, including the use of previously disturbed areas, combined agriculture and renewable energy development (agrivoltaics), and floating solar (floatovoltaics). The guidelines also address the interests of communities that host renewable energy facilities, urging developers to engage with these communities early and often and to provide economic benefits through investments, job

creation and training opportunities. Communities are encouraged to express their values through active participation in local land use planning and budgeting processes.

"We appreciate that Oregon's high desert will serve a role in generating renewable energy for the state," said **Mark Salvo, program director for Oregon Natural Desert Association**. "But we've got to do this right, including by siting new development where it will both benefit local communities and avoid impacts to the wildlife, watersheds, wildlands and cultural resources that make this region so special. This new guidance can help to do that."

In 2021, Oregon passed legislation (HB2021) committing the state to reducing its carbon emissions. This legislation mandates that 100% of the electricity used by Oregonians be generated from non-emitting sources by 2040. An analysis of Oregon's renewable energy potential found that the state could meet its clean energy goals with "a combined available capacity of over 1,500 gigawatts of solar photovoltaic, onshore wind, offshore wind, and geothermal resource spread throughout the state," although the availability of transmission infrastructure will be a significant constraint.

"The numerous insights contained in this report offer what we hope is a critical and robust roadmap for communities, developers, and regulators working together to meet Oregon's ambitious energy goals," said **Josh Axelrod, senior policy advocate with the Natural Resources Defense Council**. "Achieving success will mean not only that Oregon's prized natural, historical, cultural, agricultural, and recreational resources are preserved to the greatest extent possible, but also that the benefits of the energy transition are enjoyed by residents across the state, especially those in communities living near future generation projects."

Oregon has rich natural areas and a proud history of livelihoods and communities based in the use of natural resources. The state prioritizes conservation through its land use planning goals, which include protections for wildlife habitats and lands used for agriculture and timber. The expansion of renewable energy development to meet Oregon's climate goals will require tradeoffs, and careful planning and citizen engagement are needed to strike the best balance between renewable energy and the state's other land use priorities.