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Seattle City Light's Opening Statement - Western Technical Conference

Seattle City Light (SCL) appreciates the opportunity to participate in the Commission's Western Technical Conference on Environmental Regulations and Electric Reliability, Wholesale Energy Markets and Energy Infrastructure.

SCL is the municipally-owned electric utility of The City of Seattle. The utility provides electricity for more than 400,000 residential, commercial and industrial customers in Seattle and several surrounding suburban cities and communities. Ninety percent of Seattle's electricity is generated through hydroelectric operations, much of which is owned and operated by the utility. SCL believes addressing climate change through regulating emissions of greenhouse gases is an urgent and vitally important action.

As we discuss reliability issues today, SCL thinks that it is important to consider the reliability impacts of not taking significant steps to address climate change. The impacts of climate change on mountain snowpack and glaciers that supply much of the water for our hydroelectric projects poses a threat to Seattle and the region's ability to continue to prosper in the coming years. In the last 20 years we have seen flows coming into our Skagit Hydro Project during the April to September period drop by 11 percent on average from earlier years and seen more frequent and larger floods. We have witnessed these events occur this winter with floods and warmer temperatures and less snowpack for hydro generation.

Partly due to the high variability of hydro generation from year to year in the Northwest we have worked on regional solutions to reliability issues in the past and look forward to doing so in the future. This includes planning conducted by the Northwest Power & Conservation Council in establishing Regional Power Plans, coordinated hydro storage operations to ensure reliable load service through the Pacific Northwest Coordination Agreement and the recent plan in Washington State to close its last remaining coal plant.

While we have commented before that the regional/multistate approaches make sense and some consideration of alternatives to the interim goals may need to be considered in those plans, we believe not preparing for and addressing climate change will seriously affect the reliability of the Bulk Electric Systems including droughts affecting hydro generation and cooling water intake for fossil plants, dryer conditions leading to wildfires threatening generation and transmission facilities and hotter climates in the West leading to higher peak loads in the summer.

The City of Seattle and SCL have been long-time advocates for federal action on climate change. The EPA proposed Clean Power Plan finally provides us an opportunity for significant reductions in carbon emissions on a national scale.