

March 17, 2015

Idaho Public Utilities Commission  
PO Box 83720  
Boise, ID 83720

Re: IPE-E-15-01

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Idaho Power's filing with the PUC to shorten the length of PURPA contracts.

Aspen Skiing Company is a four-season resort based in Colorado. We own and operate four ski mountains, two hotels, and 18 restaurants, employing 3,500 people in winter. We are now developing a 100-room hotel in downtown Ketchum.

While we're pleased to be moving some of our business to Idaho, and to creating permanent jobs in the Ketchum area, one barrier to this move has been Idaho Power's lack of support for solar energy. As a business, we have a commitment to climate solutions, because climate change threatens our business. A 2010 study<sup>1</sup> showed that in low snow years, which scientists tell us we'll see more of in a warming world, Idaho loses 523,105 M skier visits (a 17% decline) and \$43.2 M in revenue. Nationally low snow years generate a billion dollars less revenue than good snow years. If we're building a hotel, we want to make sure we can fill it in the winter.

At the same time, we've noticed that the fixes to the climate problem tend to create jobs and boost the economy. We have 4,000 wind power jobs in Colorado. And we've watched as the solar industry here has created jobs and bolstered the local economy with in-state income, both through wages and also through savings that

<sup>1</sup> [http://protectourwinters.org/climate\\_report/report.pdf](http://protectourwinters.org/climate_report/report.pdf)

result from rooftop energy production. (In contrast, the mayor of Ketchum tells us that \$35 million per year leaves Idaho to pay for energy generated out of state.) We have installed 175 kilowatts of solar energy ourselves, and we're making money on it. Our utility here supports the installations, and we plan to do more.

Idaho Power's desire to reduce the length of PURPA contracts is intended to reduce the number of new solar installations in its service territory. Shorter contracts will do just that, because financing for solar works through 15+ year proformas, and can't be financed on shorter timeframes. That suits Idaho Power because solar is a threat to their business model. The more people and businesses that generate their own power, the less income they make. Beyond being anticompetitive and monopolistic, this approach is archaic. It bucks an inevitable trend towards deployment of increasingly cheap distributed power, of which solar is only one form. Idaho Power will go out of business if it keeps its head in the sand, which in itself will be a disservice to customers. Like utilities in Germany, it will need to change its business structure to stay viable. Delaying that change doesn't make sense.

Please reject Idaho power's request to shorten the length of contracts for new renewable energy. And we'd ask you to go even further, exploring ways to help Idaho power profitably move into the modern world of distributed power and clean energy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Auden Schendler', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Auden Schendler  
Vice President, Sustainability