



# Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

## High-Voltage Transmission Facilities in Washington

Chapter 5 - Consultation and Engagement

October 2025

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# Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement

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## 5.0 Chapter 5 – Consultation and Engagement

This chapter describes the public scoping efforts; Tribal engagement and government-to-government consultation; and agency cooperation, consultation, and coordination that helped support the development of the Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

In defining the scope of nonproject review of electrical transmission facilities with a nominal voltage of 230 kilovolts or greater (transmission facilities), the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) requested input from agencies, federally recognized Indian Tribes,<sup>1</sup> industry partners, stakeholders, local governments, and the public.

### 5.1 Public Scoping

Public scoping was used to inform the scope and geographic areas analyzed for the siting of transmission facilities. The 30-day public scoping period for the Programmatic EIS began when EFSEC sent the public scoping notice to Tribal governments, organizations, agencies, and interested parties on June 28, 2024.

#### 5.1.1 Public Scoping Meetings

Public scoping meetings are an essential part of the environmental review process, particularly under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). These meetings serve several important purposes, including the following:

- **Early Public Involvement:** Scoping meetings invite the public to participate early in the EIS process. This early involvement helps identify the range of issues and concerns that need to be addressed.

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<sup>1</sup> Tribal notifications were sent to all federally recognized Tribes in Washington and those with Treaty reserved rights in the state. Additionally, notifications were sent to the Chinook, Duwamish, Kikiallus, Nlaka'pamux, Snoqualmoo, Steilacoom, and Wanapum.

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- **Defining the Scope:** The meetings help define the scope of the EIS by gathering input on the potential adverse environmental impacts, alternatives, and mitigation measures that should be considered, as well as the geographic extent.
- **Transparency and Communication:** Scoping meetings ensure transparency by providing information about the project and the EIS process. They also offer a platform for open communication between the public, industry partners, and regulatory agencies.
- **Public Input:** Scoping meetings provide an opportunity for the public to voice their opinions, ask questions, and submit written comments. This input is crucial for ensuring that the EIS addresses all relevant concerns and reflects the community’s interests.
- **Regulatory Compliance:** Holding public scoping meetings is a requirement under SEPA. It ensures that the environmental review process complies with legal standards and incorporates public participation.

Table 5.1-1 summarizes the public scoping meetings that were held for the Programmatic EIS.

Table 5.1-1: Public Scoping Meeting Summary

Meeting Date and Time <sup>(a)</sup>	Meeting Location	Approximate Number of Attendees
July 18, 2024, 5:00 p.m.	Virtual (Microsoft Teams)	20
July 23, 2024, 5:00 p.m.	Virtual (Microsoft Teams)	15

Notes:

<sup>(a)</sup> All times are Pacific Daylight Time

5.1.2 Public Scoping Comment Period

The public scoping comment period for the Programmatic EIS was held from June 28, 2024, to July 28, 2024. EFSEC accepted written scoping comments online, by postal mail, and verbally during online public scoping meetings.

A variety of scoping materials were available on EFSEC’s Programmatic EIS website, for public review throughout the scoping period. The website provided information on scoping, including how to comment and a link to an online comment form.

# 5.2 Draft Programmatic EIS Public Participation

In addition to the previously held scoping meetings, EFSEC invited the public to participate in public meetings to discuss the published Draft Programmatic EIS. The public’s input was invaluable as EFSEC worked to ensure that all potential significant adverse environmental impacts were considered. EFSEC encouraged all interested parties to attend and share their perspectives. Participation was crucial in helping make informed decisions that reflect the needs and values of Washington's communities.

## 5.2.1 Public Information Meeting

EFSEC held an informational public meeting virtually on April 8, 2025, to present the Draft Programmatic EIS. The informational public meeting featured a presentation of the Draft Programmatic EIS materials. This meeting provided an overview of the project, outlined key findings, and offered an opportunity for the public to ask questions and learn more about the Programmatic EIS before submitting formal comments. No comments were taken at the public informational meeting.

## 5.2.2 Public Comment Hearings

Two public hearings on the Draft Programmatic EIS were held virtually on April 22, 2025, and April 24, 2025. Public comments were taken at the two hearings for the Programmatic EIS. A summary is provided in **Table 5.2-1**.

**Table 5.2-1: Public Comment Hearing Summary**

Meeting Date and Time <sup>(a)</sup>	Meeting Location	Approximate Number of Attendees
April 22, 2025, 5:00 p.m.	Virtual (Microsoft Teams)	15
April 24, 2025, 5:00 p.m.	Virtual (Microsoft Teams)	10

**Notes:**

<sup>(a)</sup> All times are Pacific Daylight Time

The events were attended by members of the public, representatives of governmental agencies and Tribes, and non-governmental organizations. The meeting transcripts and comments are available for review on the publicly accessible EFSEC website.

## 5.3 Tribal Engagement and Consultation

EFSEC recognizes that Tribes are sovereign governments, not stakeholders, and that government-to-government consultation with Tribes must be independent of public comment processes and tailored to each Tribe's protocols and preferences. In its outreach, EFSEC sought to support the principles of early, ongoing, and culturally appropriate engagement, consistent with Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.21C.405, RCW 43.376, and Executive Order 21-02. EFSEC offered consultation at the earliest stages of planning and will remain open to communication throughout the development of subsequent project-level reviews.

EFSEC and its consultants communicated with Tribes primarily by email and postal mail. If no responses were received, the consultants and EFSEC staff followed up by phone. Written communications were addressed to the Tribal Chairs with copies to the Natural and Cultural Resources Directors. All communications extended an offer of government-to-government consultation at any time.

Tribal engagement began with the publication of the Scoping Memo on June 28, 2024. EFSEC initiated outreach when Tribes were invited to review EFSEC's proposed geographic and technical scoping for the Programmatic EIS and provide feedback and guidance to EFSEC on how best to address Tribal resources in the Draft Programmatic EIS.

In September of 2024, EFSEC's consultants prepared and distributed a package of materials to inform Tribal governments on the Programmatic EIS and offer government-to-government consultation. The materials provided included a cover letter from EFSEC, a letter from the consultant providing information on the Programmatic EIS and inviting engagement, and a link to a form that the Tribes could use to inform EFSEC of the Tribes' desired level of engagement, request formal consultation, and request a physical copy of the Draft Programmatic EIS by mail. This outreach also included a description of how and why EFSEC had elected to exclude Tribal lands from the geographic scope of the Programmatic EIS by default, with an offer for Tribes to choose to include their lands within the scope, if desired. No Tribe expressed an interest in including their lands, so all recognized Tribal lands have remained outside of the geographic scope of the Programmatic EIS.



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The consultant also made efforts via phone, email, and physical mail to contact each Tribe individually to confirm if they were comfortable reviewing a digital version of the Draft Programmatic EIS available online via electronic links on EFSEC's website or if they preferred a hard copy of the Draft Programmatic EIS or a thumb drive containing the electronic version.

For Tribes that indicated that the version available online would suffice, EFSEC provided notice of the URL upon its publication on March 28, 2025. Hard copies were mailed to the Tribes that requested printed format on April 7, 2025.

In May 2025, EFSEC attended the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) Mid-Year Convention. This convention is a major gathering for Tribal leaders and representatives from more than 50 Northwest Tribal governments. At the ATNI event, EFSEC:

- Presented an overview of the Programmatic EIS and its relevance to Tribal lands, treaty rights, and cultural resources during a plenary session.
- Offered direct Q&A sessions and informal discussions to clarify scope, process, and opportunities for Tribal input during the conference.
- Shared materials and contact information for follow-up consultation and engagement at a display table in the exhibition hall.

EFSEC continued to provide opportunities for Tribal input following the close of the public comment period and during the preparation of the Final Programmatic EIS. For Tribes that had expressed interest in consultation during the public comment period, EFSEC responded in the affirmative and offered to schedule formal government-to-government consultation at a time and place convenient to those Tribes. These efforts are documented in the administrative record, and EFSEC remains committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with Tribal governments after the Final Programmatic EIS is published and as project-specific environmental reviews are conducted.

The following list includes all Tribes that were invited to engage in the preparation of this Programmatic EIS and invited to enter into government-to-government consultation:

- Chinook Indian Nation
- Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation
- Coeur d'Alene Tribe

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- Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon
- Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation
- Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation
- Cowlitz Indian Tribe
- Duwamish Tribe
- Hoh Indian Tribe
- Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe
- Kalispel Tribe of Indians
- Kikiallus Indian Nation
- Lower Elwha Klallam Tribe
- Lummi Nation
- Makah Tribe
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
- Nez Perce Tribe
- Nisqually Tribe
- Nlaka'pamux Tribal Nation
- Nooksack Indian Tribe
- Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe
- Puyallup Tribe of Indians
- Quileute Nation
- Quinault Indian Nation
- Samish Indian Nation
- Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe
- Shoalwater Bay Indian Tribe
- Skokomish Indian Tribe
- Snohomish Tribe
- Snoqualmie Indian Tribe
- Snoqualmoo Tribe of Indians
- Spokane Tribe of Indians
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Steilacoom Indian Tribe
- Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians
- Suquamish Tribe
- Swinomish Indian Tribal Community
- Tulalip Tribes
- Upper Skagit Indian Tribe
- Wanapum Tribe

EFSEC continued to provide opportunities for Tribal input following the close of the public comment period and during the preparation of the Final Programmatic EIS. In accordance with state consultation protocols, EFSEC initiated formal government-to-government consultation with select Tribes, particularly those who had expressed interest in consultation during the public comment period. EFSEC's outreach included

written invitations to consult, follow-up communications, and offers to meet in person or virtually. These efforts were documented in the administrative record, and EFSEC remains committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with Tribal governments throughout the Programmatic EIS and project-specific environmental reviews.

# 5.4 Agency Cooperation, Consultation, and Coordination

The following agencies provided input or technical review for the Programmatic EIS:

- Benton County
- Bonneville Power Administration
- U.S. Department of Defense
- Grant County
- Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Washington Governor's Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance
- Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Washington State Department of Commerce
- Washington State Department of Ecology
- Washington State Department of Natural Resources
- Washington State Department of Transportation
- Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission

# 5.5 Industry Partners

The following industry partners provided input for the Programmatic EIS:

- Avista Corporation
- PacifiCorp
- Puget Sound Energy, Inc.

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