



Relevant Acronyms and Definitions for Western Energy Markets and Transmission

The Western energy landscape is a dynamic intersection of federal, state, utility, and non-profit organizations all working on overlapping challenges in energy policy, markets, and transmission. This document provides a focused list of relevant acronyms and definitions essential for understanding energy markets and transmission in the Western United States. This document serves as a stand alone reference resource, and also complements the two ATNI & Gridworks reports on the Bonneville Power Administration and the Transmission and Markets Engagement Guide.

Additional Informational Sources

NWEC Acronyms page

nwenergy.org/energy-101/nwec-acronyms/

FERC Acronym website

ferc.gov/about/what-ferc/about/acronyms



Electricity and Energy Market Common Phrases

Common energy market and electricity phrases and acronyms are captured below. An energy market is an agreement to connect power and demand across a defined region. Utilities play a role in these markets.

Acronym	Definition	Explanation and Notes
aMW	Average megawatt	The amount of energy represented by 1 megawatt (MW) used or generated for a whole year.
BA	Balancing Areas	The collection of generation, transmission, and loads within the metered boundaries of a balancing authority (usually a utility/utility footprint).
BAA	Balancing Area Authority	A Balancing Area Authority (BAA) operates the transmission system of its Balancing Area (BA) to balance generation and load and maintain electrical frequency (60 cycles per second) and the flow of power to other BAs in a manner that meets the North American Reliability Corporation (NERC) mandatory reliability standards.

Co-op	Cooperative (utility)	A cooperative is a private, nonprofit business owned and governed by the consumers that it serves. A utilities co-op is managed by and for the community it serves, giving each customer the opportunity to participate in the governance of the co-op.
CO₂	Carbon dioxide	Carbon dioxide is a chemical compound found in the atmosphere. It is the main byproduct of fossil fuel combustion, and one of the greenhouse gasses contributing to climate change.
COUs	Consumer-owned utilities	Co-operative utilities, municipal utilities, and public utility districts are types of consumer-owned utilities (COUs). COU typically means that the utility is built as a non-profit or as a government body and is managed by a governing board or council. In Washington and Oregon, which has many public utilities, COU is a shorthand to differentiate public or co-op utilities from private, investor-owned utilities.
EIM	Energy Imbalance Market	An energy imbalance market (EIM) is a real-time market that balances the supply and demand of electricity over a defined physical grid. An EIM allows for the sharing of balancing resources across multiple balancing areas, thereby improving efficiencies and reducing costs.”
GHG	Greenhouse Gas	Greenhouse gases are chemical compounds in the Earth's atmosphere that trap heat and cause the greenhouse effect.
GWP	Global Warming Potential	Global warming potential (GWP) is a measurement of how much a greenhouse gas contributes to global warming. CO ₂ is the measurement's baseline, with a GWP of 1.
IOUs	Investor-owned utilities	Investor-owned utilities, or IOUs, are for-profit corporations owned by either public or private shareholders. Most are publicly owned with stocks traded publicly, while others are owned by private equity. IOUs may provide gas or electric service, and many provide both.
ISO	Independent system operator	An independent system operator (ISO) is an independent organization that handles electric grid operations and market facilitation for certain electric markets. ISOs in the United States are FERC-regulated entities with the exception of the ERCOT in Texas, which is regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Texas.
MWh	Megawatt-Hours	A megawatt hour (MWh) is a unit of measurement for electricity that represents the amount of electricity used or delivered over a period of one hour.
kV	kilovolt	A unit of electrical potential equal to a thousand volts

OATTs	open access transmission tariffs	Tariffs outline the rules for getting transmission service from a balancing area (i.e., utility that operates a portion of the transmission system).
PUD	Public Utility District	A Public Utility District (PUD) is a community-owned, not-for-profit utility that provides services like water, electricity, and telecommunications.
RA	Resource Adequacy	Resource adequacy refers to the ability of the electric grid to satisfy the end-user power demand at any time. RA ensures there is enough capacity and reserves for the grid operator to maintain a balanced supply and demand across the electric system.
RTO	Regional transmission organization	An RTO is an organization formed at the approval of the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). In the areas where an RTO is established, it coordinates, controls and monitors the operation of the electrical power system, usually within a single US State, but sometimes encompassing multiple states. RTO and ISO (Independent System Operator) are largely interchangeable terms.

Existing Independent System Operators & Transmission Planning Regions

Across the United States, there are many different markets and organized transmission planning regions. There are more markets east of the Rocky Mountains. Organizations in the Western states are in the middle of market planning conversations to decide whether to join two competing market offerings: one from CAISO and one from SPP.

Acronym	Definition	Explanation and Notes
CAISO	California Independent System Operator	CAISO maintains grid reliability in the state of California, one of the largest and most modern power grids in the world. CAISO operates a transparent, accessible wholesale energy market called the Western Energy Imbalance Market and is working to launch a complementary effort called the Extended Day-Ahead Market. It is currently the only Independent System Operator (ISO) in the West. www.caiso.com
<i>Proposed Market Expansion</i>		
EDAM	Extended Day-Ahead Market	The Extended Day-Ahead Market (EDAM) is a voluntary day-ahead market that is operated through CAISO governance.
IESO	Independent Electric Systems Operator	IESO is a Canadian independent system operator (ISO), serving the province of Ontario. www.ieso.ca
ERCOT	Electric Reliability Council of Texas	ERCOT is the Texas Independent System Operator (ISO). www.ercot.com



ISO-NE	New England ISO	ISO-NE is an independent system operator (ISO) that serves Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and Vermont. www.iso-ne.com
MISO	Midcontinent ISO	MISO is an Independent system operator (ISO) that serves across 15 states in the midwest and the Canadian province of Manitoba. www.misoenergy.org
MSC	Markets States Committee	The Markets States Committee (MSC) is a committee within the Markets+ day-ahead market, operated through Southwest Power Pool (SPP).
Northern Grid	Northern Grid	This is a FERC-jurisdictional regional transmission planning organization, largely organized and made up of utility representatives. The Northern Grid members include investor-owned utilities and consumer-owned utilities located in California, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Utah, Washington and Wyoming. Bonneville Power Administration also participates in some Northern Grid planning efforts but is not required to participate in cost allocation (paying) for transmission lines. www.northerngrid.net
NYISO	New York ISO	NYISO is an independent system operator (ISO), serving the state of New York. www.nyiso.com
SPP	Southwest Power Pool	Southwest Power Pool (SPP) is a regional transmission organization (RTO) that operates in 14 states east of the Rocky Mountains. SPP is also running the Energy Imbalance Service (EIS) Market and the Western Energy Imbalance Services (WEIS).
<i>Proposed Market Expansion</i>		
WEIM	Western Energy Imbalance Market	This is a CAISO market offering. The Western Energy Imbalance Market is a real-time energy market. www.westerneim.com
<i>Proposed Market Expansion</i>		
WEIS	Western Energy Imbalance Services	This is a SPP market offering. SPP's Western Energy Imbalance Service market (WEIS) will balance generation and load regionally and in real time for participants in the Western Interconnection. www.spp.org/western-services/weis/
WestConnect	WestConnect	FERC-jurisdictional regional transmission planning organization, largely organized and made up of utility representatives from Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, Wyoming and Utah. www.westconnect.com

Non-Governmental Organizations, Coalitions, and Regional Forums

There are a variety of non-profits and coalitions organizing within the energy sphere in the West. Some of these are gatherings of state officials and decision-makers, and others are non-profits with specific missions like efficiency, affordability, or clean energy. Some are non-governmental organizations with designated authority from the Federal Government through the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

Acronym	Definition	Explanation and Notes
BOSR	Body of State Regulators	BOSR is an educational forum for Western state energy commissioners on CAISO's market related issues.
Connected West	Connected West	Connected West is a 20-year transmission planning study aimed at forecasting long-range transmission infrastructure needs of the Western grid required to support a highly decarbonized and electrified economy.
COSR	Committee of State Representatives	The Committee of State Representatives is a standing Committee within the Western Resource Adequacy Program (WRAP), and is composed of one representative from each state or provincial jurisdiction that regulates at least one participant of WRAP. www.westernenergyboard.org/cosr/
CREPC	Committee on Regional Electric Power Cooperation	CREPC is a joint committee of the Western Interstate Energy Board (WIEB) and the Western Conference of Public Service Commissioners (WCPSC). CREPC is composed of an energy office official and a regulatory utility commissioner from each of the Western states and Canadian provinces in the West and focuses on electric power system policy issues that require regional cooperation in the West. www.westernenergyboard.org/committee-on-regional-electric-power-cooperation/
NERC	North American Electric Reliability Corporation	The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC) is a not-for-profit international regulatory authority whose mission is to assure the effective and efficient reduction of risks to the reliability and security of the grid.
TNC Power of Place	The Nature Conservancy's report; The Power of Place	This national study highlights the need for place based planning across all levels of government if we are to accelerate decarbonization, limit environmental and social impacts, and minimize costs.
WECC	Western Electricity Coordinating Council	The Western Electricity Coordinating Council (WECC) is a non-profit corporation that exists to assure a reliable Bulk Electric System in the geographic area known as the Western Interconnection. WECC has been approved by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) as the Regional Entity for the Western Interconnection.
WestTEC	Western Transmission Expansion Coalition	WestTEC is a first of its kind West-wide transmission study effort, led by utilities through Western Power Pool with analysis by Energy Strategies. www.westernpowerpool.org/about/programs/western-transmission-expansion-coalition

WGPI	West-wide Governance Pathways Initiative	The West-Wide Governance Pathways Initiative (WWGPI) was initiated through a letter from multiple individual state commissioners to the leadership of WIEB and CREPC in July 2023. The WGPI was formed to develop a new and independent entity to enable independent governance over the CAISO Western Energy Imbalance Market (WEIM) and the Extended Day Ahead Market (EDAM) and the ability to add other voluntary regional services as the West desires. www.westernenergyboard.org/wwgpi/
WIEB	Western Interstate Energy Board	The Western Interstate Energy Board is an organization of 11 Western States and two western Canadian Provinces. The purpose of the Board is to provide the instruments and framework for cooperative state efforts to “enhance the economy of the West and contribute to the well-being of the region’s people.” www.westernenergyboard.org
WIRAB	Western Interconnection Regional Advisory Body	The Western Interconnection Regional Advisory Body (WIRAB) was created by FERC. WIRAB has the authority to advise FERC, the North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), and the Western Regional Entity (i.e., WECC) on matters pertaining to electric grid reliability in the Western Interconnection. www.westernenergyboard.org/western-interconnection-regional-advisory-body/
WPP	Western Power Pool	The Western Power Pool (formerly Northwest Power Pool) is a corporation based in Portland that helps its members, which are electric utilities that own generating plants and sell power throughout the Northwest and Western Canada, achieve the maximum benefits from coordinating the operations of their power plants. WPP is a voluntary organization that includes electric generating utilities in the Pacific Northwest, British Columbia, and Alberta. The Power Pool has a significant impact on power planning in the Northwest, and it also coordinates the Western Resource Adequacy Program Website.
WRAP	Western Resource Adequacy Program	The WRAP is the first regional reliability planning and compliance program in the west. It is run by Western Power Pool. www.westernpowerpool.org/about/programs/western-resource-adequacy-program
WREGIS	Western Renewable Energy Generation Information System	WREGIS is an independent, web-based tracking system for renewable energy certificates (REC) that covers the Western Interconnection territory. WREGIS is a division of WECC. www.wecc.org/program-areas/wregis

Federal Governmental Organizations and Federal Laws

Different federal government agencies are involved in various aspects of energy planning and management systems.

Acronym	Definition	Explanation and Notes
BLM	Bureau of Land Management	The Bureau of Land Management is an agency within the United States Department of the Interior responsible for administering federal lands.
BPA	Bonneville Power Administration	Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is a power marketing administration created to sell and transmit power from the federal hydropower system on the Columbia River and its tributaries. BPA is a federal agency within the Department of Energy. It owns and operates the largest high-voltage transmission system in the Pacific Northwest and also invests heavily in fish and wildlife mitigation and energy efficiency programs. It primarily serves consumer-owned utilities in the PNW region.
FCRPS	Federal Columbia River Power System	The dams on the Columbia River and its tributaries and the Columbia Generating Station nuclear plant make up the combined Federal Columbia River Power System.
FERC	Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission is an independent agency that regulates the interstate transmission of electricity, natural gas, and oil. FERC also reviews proposals to build liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals and interstate natural gas pipelines as well as licensing hydropower projects. The Energy Policy Act of 2005 gave FERC additional responsibilities as outlined in the Strategic Plan. FERC commissioners are nominated by the president and confirmed by congress.
FTR	Financial Transmission Rights	Financial Transmission Rights are energy contracts between two parties that allow them to exchange the price difference between two electricity nodes, or locational points on the electric grid.



State Laws and State Agencies

In the last five years, some Western states have set laws and requirements to achieve 100% clean energy by specific dates. These laws are important frameworks to understand decisions made by state agencies and utilities in Washington and Oregon.

Acronym	Definition	Explanation and Notes
CCA	Climate Commitment Act	Greenhouse gas reduction law in Washington, passed in 2021
CETA	Clean Energy Transformation Act	Washington 100% clean energy law, passed in 2019
HB 2021	Oregon House Bill 2021	100% Clean Energy for All law in Oregon
IPUC	Idaho Public Utilities Commission	The IPUC is the state agency that regulates investor-owned utilities in Idaho.
MPSC	Montana Public Service Commission	The MPSC is the state agency that regulates investor-owned utilities in Montana.
OPUC	Oregon Public Utility Commission	The OPUC is the state agency that regulates investor-owned utilities in Oregon State.
RPS	Renewable Portfolio Standards	Renewable Portfolio Standards requirements or goals for energy producers or providers to supply energy from low- or zero-carbon emission sources. These policies require or encourage energy suppliers to provide their customers with a stated minimum share of energy from eligible energy resources.
WA UTC	Washington Utilities and Transportation Commission	The WA UTC is the state agency that regulates investor-owned utilities in Washington State.



ATNI ENERGY

In 1953 farsighted tribal leaders in the Northwest formed the Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians, and dedicated it to tribal sovereignty and self-determination. Today, ATNI is a nonprofit organization representing 57 Northwest tribal governments from Oregon, Idaho, Washington, southeast Alaska, Northern California and Western Montana. ATNI is an organization whose foundation is composed of the people it is meant to serve.

atnitribes.org