



May 2024

Welcome to this month's issue of ***Solar Newsbriefs***, brought to you by the Washington State University Energy Program. Please feel free to forward this issue to those of your colleagues interested in solar energy. For archives of past *Solar Newsbriefs*, visit

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Oregon News

Salinas, USDA Meet with Oregon Farmers to Talk Renewable Energy Development

On the heels of U.S. Rep. Andrea Salinas announcing that five Oregon farms will receive money from the federal government for solar energy projects, other farmers told Salinas and representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that they'll need more aid to move away from fossil fuels—Alex Baumhardt, *Oregon Capital Chronicle*, April 8, 2024: [Click here for read more.](#)

Oregon Irrigation District Receives Federal Tax Money to Build Floating Solar Panels

The North Unit Irrigation District (NUID) in Central Oregon will receive a \$2.5 million federal taxpayer grant to construct and monitor solar panels on the main canal of its Deschutes project... The irrigation district aims to have floating photovoltaic solar panels on the main canal of the Deschutes project located near Bend—Tom Joyce, *Center Square*, April 12, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

ODOE Community Renewable Energy Grant Program

The Community Renewable Energy Grant Program is open to Oregon Tribes, public bodies, and consumer-owned utilities. Public bodies include counties, municipalities, and special government bodies such as ports and irrigation districts. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis and priority will be given to projects that support program equity goals, demonstrate community energy resilience, and include energy efficiency and demand response. Application Portal Closes May 10, 2024. [Click here to read more.](#)

Merkley, Wyden: Nearly \$4.5 Million for Renewable Energy Projects to Lower Costs in Rural Oregon

Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden announced today the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is sending a total of \$4,459,297 in Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants to support 20 renewable energy projects in rural communities across the state... The investments will be used to help farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses adopt renewable energy technologies, conduct critical energy audits, and cut costs and carbon pollution with energy efficiency improvements. These projects will strengthen the resiliency of their operations, generate new income, and help create jobs in rural Oregon—Ron Wyden, United States Senator for Oregon, Press Release, April 15, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Here's One Solution to Save Water and Generate Clean Power in Utah

Clean energy and adequate water are among Utah's biggest challenges, and a federally funded experiment will try to address both by placing solar panels over a northern Utah canal. The [U.S. Department of Interior announced](#) it will invest \$19 million to turn canals in California, Oregon and Utah into floating power plants. Funding comes from the Inflation Reduction Act. The bulk of it – \$15 million – goes to the [Delta-Mendota Canal Floating Solar Project](#), which includes several miles of solar panels on a canal in the San Joaquin Valley in central California. And another \$2.55 million is going to the [North Unit Irrigation District](#), which supplies water to farmers in the Deschutes River basin of Oregon—Tim Fitzpatrick, *Salt Lake Tribune*, April 16, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

20 Oregon Businesses Awarded Rural Energy Grants

A busy Klamath Falls dental office, a popular farm store in Gervais and a landmark Astoria craft brewery are among the recipients of \$4.4 million in federal funding for rural green energy... The two projects valued the highest are both worth \$1 million. In Burns, Burns Solar will get a 100-megawatt ground-mounted solar PV system that will produce electricity to be sold to residents through the Oregon Community Solar Program. In Astoria, Fort George Brewery will install a 560-kilowatt PV system on its brewery roof. The array is expected to lower the brewer's annual utility bill by \$60,907—Garrett Andrews, *Oregon Business*, April 17, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Oregon Awarded Nearly \$87 Million to Boost Solar in Low-Income Communities

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Oregon will receive \$86.6 million through the Solar for All grant... The program opens the doors for low-income and rural residents and disadvantaged communities, those most impacted by climate change, to have access to these energy saving technologies without being financially burdened... The program also aims to curb greenhouse gas emissions, reduce air pollution and create renewable energy jobs to boost local economies—Monica Samayoa, *OPB*, April 24, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Portland Schools Could See \$50 Million Boost for Climate Action

The Portland Clean Energy Fund is one step closer in investing tens of millions of dollars in seven school districts within Portland city limits to boost renewable energy upgrades and climate action over the next five years... Portland city commissioners heard from staff of the Portland Clean Energy Fund, or PCEF, on Thursday about an initiative that could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from a handful of public schools in Portland. The money would also increase climate action through student-led projects—Monica Samayoa, *OPB*, April 26, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Washington State News

Wellness House Solar Project

Wellness House Yakima will soon generate its own clean, renewable power thanks to a funding award from Pacific Power's Blue Sky program participants Dynamic Solar & Electric and Spark NW. They came together to support renewable energy and our Yakima community and it's remarkable to see the tremendous difference their support has made...The money will support the installation of Solar Energy

at Wellness House Yakima, an organization that offers free support services, education and resources to individuals suffering from cancer or other life-challenging illnesses—Wellness House, [April 2024]: [Click here to read more.](#)

Site Council Drafts Report to Inslee on Horse Heaven Power Project

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council may recommend Washington Gov. Jay Inslee approve the Horse Heaven wind and solar installation, but with restrictions the developer previously said would gut the project... EFSEC staff Monday released a [proposed report](#) to Inslee based on discussions the council's seven voting members have had about Scout Clean Energy's application to put solar panels and wind turbines on rolling hills near the Tri-Cities in southeast Washington—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 3, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Washington State Passes Cutting-Edge Policies To Reduce Climate Pollution

Washington passed [the first law](#) in the United States that outlines a pathway for a combined gas and electricity utility to transition away from gas for all of its customers. Proposed by Puget Sound Energy, the bill allows the utility to merge electric and gas customers into a single rate base and supports electrification of whole neighborhoods to allow for the decommissioning of gas lines in the future. Advocates worked through challenging negotiations to ensure low-income ratepayers will be first in line for electrification funding. Washington State requires all utilities to achieve 100 percent clean electricity by 2045, and this law paves the way for the state's largest dual-fuel utility to decarbonize as well—*Clean Technica*, April 4, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Wenatchi-P'squosa People Demonstrate Against Proposed Solar Project

On a Thursday morning in late March, a group of Wenatchi-P'squosa people and a few dozen supporters assembled amid patches of snow and mud atop Badger Mountain in central Washington. The foggy sagebrush-dotted bluff is among dozens of locations that developers want to use for new renewable energy efforts in the state... The gathering – the first Indigenous-led demonstration against this proposed development – was intended to highlight threats to cultural resources including food and sacred sites on the mountain—B. 'Toastie' Oaster, *High Country News*, April 5, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Natural Gas Shines as Solar Power Eclipsed

Natural gas-fired power plants ramped up to offset most of the solar power lost during the April 8 eclipse, the U.S. Energy Information Administration reported Friday... Solar power production nationwide dropped by 39%, or 23.3 gigawatts, from 11 a.m. to noon PDT as the eclipse partially or fully blocked solar panels, according to the EIA's hourly electric grid monitor... Despite the lost solar power, U.S. electricity generation increased by 2.3 gigawatts from hour to hour. Washington's Clean Energy Transformation Act requires electric utilities to phase out natural gas-fired electricity by 2045. The next solar eclipse in the U.S. will be in 2044—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 15, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Horse Heaven Developer Blasts EFSEC as Decision Looms on Power Project

Scout Clean Energy has accused the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council of undercutting its proposed Horse Heaven renewable energy project and the public's trust in Washington's resolve to "solve climate

change."... The Boulder, Colo.-based company launched its broadside in a final round of written comments before EFSEC decides whether to recommend the massive wind and solar project to Gov. Jay Inslee and under what conditions—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 17, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

EFSEC Sends Horse Heaven Power Project to Inslee

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council voted 5-2 Wednesday to recommend Washington Gov. Jay Inslee approve the Horse Heaven wind and solar project, but with restrictions on where turbines can be built... The recommendation to Inslee allows up to 222 turbines stretching along 25 miles of rolling hills near the Tri-Cities in southeast Washington. Solar panels would cover more than 5,000 acres, mostly farmland—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 18, 2022: [Click here to read more](#).

Tri-Cities Wind Turbine Farm Proposal Halved for Endangered Hawks

A Washington commission recommended approval Wednesday of a slimmed-down wind turbine project just south of the Tri-Cities... The Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council voted 5-2 to recommend that Gov. Jay Inslee approve the Horse Heaven Hills turbine project. The [original project had faced criticism](#) for threatening endangered ferruginous hawks and ruining views... Scout Clean Energy's original proposal also included two 500-megawatt solar panel farms on the east and west sides of the 24-mile stretch. EFSEC ordered that the eastern solar farm be removed because of its proximity to [sensitive Native cultural sites](#)—John Stang, *Crosscut*, April 18, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Solar Panels to be Installed on the Edmonds United Methodist Church Roof

Thanks to grant funding from the State of Washington, the Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program, and the United States Government Inflation Reduction Act, Edmonds United Methodist Church will be installing a 100 kW solar array that will allow us to generate 100% of our annual electricity usage—Edmonds United Methodist Church, [website], [April 2024]: [Click here to read more](#).

The Size of Washington State's Largest Wind Farm Just got Cut by 50%

The \$1.7 billion, 1,150-megawatt (MW) [Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center](#) combines wind, solar, and battery storage. The original plan was for the project to feature 244 wind turbines across 24 miles of hills, and three solar farms over 5,447 acres south of the Tri-Cities, near the Oregon border. But Horse Heaven has been stuck at the permitting stage with the seven-person Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) for the last three years—Michelle Lewis, *electrek*, April 18, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Yakama Nation Slams Horse Heaven Decision; Order not Public

The Horse Heaven wind and solar project as approved by the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council will devastate Yakama Nation cultural and treaty-reserved resources, tribal officials said. A majority of EFSEC ignored evidence that supports modifying the development to reduce impacts on ceremonial and burial grounds, and other cultural properties, Tribal Council Chairman Gerald Lewis said—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 19, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

New Federal Funds will Help Thousands in Washington Get Solar Power for Free

Washington state will receive \$156 million in federal funds for new programs to install rooftop solar on thousands of homes and apartment buildings, and to expand access to solar energy in tribal

communities... The money is a slice of [\\$7 billion in grants nationwide](#) the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced Monday through its Solar For All program, which aims to make solar energy more available and affordable for low- and moderate-income Americans—Jerry Cornfield, *Washington State Standard*, April 22, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

EFSEC Withholds Findings on Horse Heaven Project

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council declined to release a document detailing its reasons for recommending Washington Gov. Jay Inslee approve the contentious Horse Heaven wind and solar project... The council [voted 5-2](#) on April 17 to send a report to Inslee that supports allowing up to 222 turbines and more than 5,000 acres of solar panels on rolling hills, mostly farmland, near the Tri-Cities—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, April 25, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Inslee has 60 Days to Decide on Controversial Horse Heaven Wind Farm

The fate of one the largest wind farms ever proposed in Washington now rests with Gov. Jay Inslee. On Monday, the state's energy facility siting panel sent Inslee [its recommendation for approval](#) of the Horse Heaven wind and solar project, ending a contentious multi-year review. It culminated with regulators paring the Benton County project to curb threats to tribal cultural resources and endangered hawks—Jerry Cornfield, *Washington State Standard*, April 30, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

National News

US Experienced Staggering Growth in Solar and Wind Power Over the Last Decade

When you live far from the sprawling fields befitting utility-scale solar and wind farms, it's easy to feel like clean energy isn't coming online fast enough. But renewables have grown at a staggering rate since 2014 and now account for 22 percent of the nation's electricity. Solar alone has grown an impressive eightfold in 10 years—Syris Valentine, *Grist*, April 3, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

Federal Government Announces Project Funding for Solar on Irrigation Canals

U.S. Representative Jared Huffman (CA-02) announced \$19.5 million from President Biden's Investing in America Agenda to install solar panels in irrigation canals as part of an initiative to study the water efficiency gains and amount of clean energy produced for future larger scale implementation... The projects in California, Oregon and Utah are funded by the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), which makes available \$25 million for the design, study and implementation of projects to cover Reclamation-related water conveyance facilities with solar panels—Kelsey Misbrener, *Solar Power World*, April 5, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

State-Level Community Solar Programs Extend 20% Monthly Bill Savings to Low-Income Households

Low-income households are now able to save on their electricity bills by signing up for a Department of Energy (DOE) and Department of Health and Human Services community solar program. The [Clean Energy Connector](#) is a new software platform extending access to community solar subscriptions—Ryan Kennedy, *pv magazine*, April 8, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

New U.S. DOE Report on Accelerating Deployment of Grid Solutions to Lower Costs & Improve Reliability

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced the release of its latest Pathways to Commercial Liftoff report, focused on unleashing the potential of advanced grid solutions. “[Pathways to Commercial Liftoff: Innovative Grid Deployment](#),” marks the tenth installment in the [Liftoff series](#) which launched in March 2023. This report demonstrates how commercially available advanced grid solutions—such as advanced conductors, dynamic line rating, and energy storage—can cost effectively increase the existing grid’s capacity to support upwards of 20–100 GW peak demand growth. These technologies would also improve grid reliability, resilience, and affordability for consumers—*Clean Technica*, April 16, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

EPA to Unleash \$7B for Low-Income Solar Projects

EPA is expected to announce the recipients of a \$7 billion climate program on Monday that aims to lower energy costs and reduce pollution in poor communities across the country by installing solar power systems on homes... The announcement, scheduled for Earth Day, comes as the administration races to advance President Joe Biden’s first-term climate agenda ahead of the November elections—Jean Chemnick, *E&E News*, April 18, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Biden-Harris Administration Announces \$7 Billion Solar for All Grants to Deliver Residential Solar, Saving Low-Income Americans \$350 Million Annually and Advancing Environmental Justice Across America

Today, April 22, as the Biden-Harris Administration celebrates Earth Day, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency announced 60 selectees that will receive \$7 billion in grant awards through the Solar for All grant competition to deliver residential solar projects to over 900,000 households nationwide. The grant competition is funded by President Biden’s Investing in America agenda through the Inflation Reduction Act, which created EPA’s \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund. The 60 selections under the \$7 billion Solar for All program will provide funds to states, territories, Tribal governments, municipalities, and nonprofits across the country to develop long-lasting solar programs that enable low-income and disadvantaged communities to deploy and benefit from distributed residential solar, lowering energy costs for families, creating good-quality jobs in communities that have been left behind, advancing environmental justice and tackling climate change—EPA, Press Release, April 22, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

IRS Issues Final Guidance for IRA’s Clean Energy Tax Credit Transferability Mechanism

The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the IRS [issued final rules on Thursday](#) for the tax credit transferability mechanism included in the Inflation Reduction Act, offering clarity to the already active tax credit market... “Until the Inflation Reduction Act introduced these new credit delivery mechanisms, governments, many types of tax-exempt organizations, and many businesses could not fully benefit from tax credits like those that incentivize clean energy construction,” Treasury said in a press release—Diana DiGangi, *Utility Dive*, April 26, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Major US Solar Manufacturers Call for Strict New Solar-Panel Tariffs

First Solar and Qcells, the two largest solar-panel manufacturers in the U.S., have joined a coalition of domestic suppliers calling for new tariffs on below-cost and state-subsidized panels imported from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand, and Vietnam... The coalition, calling itself the [American Alliance for Solar Manufacturing Trade Committee](#), is filing petitions today with the U.S. International Trade Commission

and the U.S. Department of Commerce. The cases are intended to spur an investigation into the trade practices of manufacturers in those four countries and the extent to which they are harming the U.S. solar industry—Eric Wesoff, *Canary Media*, April 24, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Funding Reminder: 30 Days Left to Apply for \$50 Million Available for Clean Energy Deployment on Tribal Lands

On March 22, DOE doubled the funding available under this FOA from \$25 million to \$50 million. Through this FOA, the [U.S. Department of Energy] Office of Indian Energy is soliciting applications from Indian Tribes, which include Alaska Native Regional Corporations and Village Corporations, Intertribal Organizations, and Tribal Energy Development Organizations, to install clean energy technology on Tribal lands. Applications are due May 30, 2024. [Click here for more information](#).

Upcoming Conferences, Events and Webinars

Solar Oregon 12th Annual Solar Wine Tour : Portland, OR : May 4

Wine tasting at local wineries who value clean energy, with private bus leaving from Portland and Tualatin. [Click here for more information and to register](#).

NW Energy Coalition Clean & Affordable Energy Conference : Boise, ID : May 7

Network with peers in the clean energy community and hear from experts on the pressing energy issues in our region. Panelists will discuss next steps in Columbia basin salmon recovery and decarbonizing our energy system, how new opportunities in broader power markets and transmission can benefit Northwest communities, and protecting customers and communities as the region decarbonizes and changes rates and regulatory structures. [Click here for more information and to register](#).

ASES 53rd Annual National Solar Conference Solar 2024 : Washington D.C. : May 20-23

This year's conference theme, "Connecting Technology & Policy," will promote the ASES mission to "accelerate equitable solar adoption and universal sustainable living by educating and building community." And will focus on models and tools for negotiating the challenges to advancing renewables by following justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion principles: [Click here for more information and to register](#).

Public Informational Briefing on Clean Energy Siting and Permitting : Webinar : May 21

Learn about options for improving clean energy siting and permitting in Washington. The Department of Commerce will host an informational webinar about a recent evaluation of state agency siting and permitting processes for clean energy projects. This effort identifies successful models used in other states and makes recommendations with the goal of more efficient and effective siting of clean energy projects. [Click here for more information and to register](#).

Community Solar Innovation Summit : Denver, CO, June 13-14

This year, the Coalition and Community Solar Access (CCSA) and our members are launching the inaugural Community Solar Innovation Summit. This is CCSA's first self-hosted conference and 100% of Summit revenues will be invested back into opening, expanding, and protecting competitive, sustainable community solar markets: [Click here for more information and to register](#).

GridTECH Connect Forum : Newport Beach CA, June 24-26

GridTECH Connect is focused on both DER and utility-scale interconnection. The conference covers community solar, battery energy storage, virtual power plants, microgrids, integrated resource planning, policy and regulation, and more: [Click here for more information and to register](#).

The Burien Solar Punk Festival : Burien, WA : Aug 10, 2024

“Solar Punk” is the festival theme, which envisions a future where community and technology are integrated to create a self-sustaining system. In this event, attendees will learn about alternative self-sustaining ways to work and power their daily lives. It is an iconic one-day event that celebrates the best of Burien and empowers the community by bringing eco-friendly businesses together to showcase what they do and connect them to the community as potential employers... The proceeds from The Burien Solar Punk Festival will be utilized to support: Key Tech Labs Green Jobs Expo, Mini Jobs Fair, Small Business Expo, funds for a new micro solar system, and stipends for the youth Green Pre-Apprenticeship Program participants. [Click here for more information](#).

2024 Washington State Solar Summit : Shoreline Community College : Oct 4, 2024

Hosted by Solar Washington since 2015 the Washington State Solar Summit is an important annual information gathering and networking event for solar industry stakeholders including manufacturers, distributors, engineers, consultants and installers, representatives from utilities, municipalities and tribes, legislators/policy makers, educators, students, advocacy organizations/nonprofits, financial lenders, and more. [Click here for more information](#).

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