



**September 5, 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**

### **Oregon to Get a Massive 900 MW Solar + Battery Storage Project**

Brookfield Renewable US has filed a Notice of Intent to develop one of Oregon's largest solar + battery storage projects....The 900-megawatt (MW) Speedway Solar and Battery Storage Project will be east of the city of Grass Valley in Sherman County and will span roughly 9,500 acres on privately owned land....Brookfield has not yet shared how much battery storage it intends to use, but the solar farm could potentially power up to 150,000 households—Michelle Lewis, *Electrek*, July 31, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Solar Lamb-Scaping: A New Approach to Balancing Agriculture and Energy Finds Eastern Oregon**

Cameron Krebs maintains the grass on a 1,200-acre solar farm with help from thousands of autonomous lawnmowers....Krebs, a sheep rancher in Morrow County, worked with Avangrid, a renewable energy business, to herd about 2,500 of his sheep around two large-scale utility solar farms from March through June—Berit Thorson, *East Oregonian*, August 1, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Ashland Helps Oregon Soak Up Solar Power; Meanwhile, Rural Farmland Shrinks**

State has a goal of preserving farmland, but that's at odds with lofty goals for climate and clean energy. It's always sunny in Ashland, at least when it comes to solar power. Rooftops shine like obsidian in new subdivisions, and Southern Oregon University is installing solar arrays with hopes of running on renewable energy. Solar power accounts for 8 million kilowatt-hours of electricity every year here, or about 5% of the total power used in Ashland, which has a population of 21,500—Kyle Odegard, *Capital Press/Rogue Valley Times*, August 4, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Tumalo Ranch's Horse Arena to Go Solar Thanks to \$92K Assist from USDA, Among Oregon Recipients Totaling \$2.18 Million**

Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden announced today the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is sending a total of \$2,182,023 in Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grants, and \$3,176,875 in a REAP loan, to support renewable energy projects in the state, including a rooftop solar array for the horse arena at JGW Ranch in Tumalo.... The investments—much like the \$4.5 million for other REAP

projects the Senators announced in April—will 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—KTVZ News Channel 21, August 7, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Solar Projects on Salem-Area Farms Get Federal Backing**

Three Salem-area farms and a local community solar project have received nearly \$4 million in federal loans and grants to support renewable energy investments.... The largest chunk of money is a loan from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Rural Development Rural Energy for America Program and is worth \$3.2 million. The loan, which is backed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, will assist New York-based Zena Solar, LLC with the purchase and installation of a 3.5 megawatt community solar array on 12 acres of land in rural Polk County on Northwest Zena Road—Joe Siess, *Salem Reporter*, August 8, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Solar Industry, Nonprofits say State Regulators, Private Utilities are Stifling Rooftop Solar**

More than three dozen solar energy companies and community and environmental nonprofits that have banded together in a new coalition are challenging state utility regulators and private utility companies over what they say are attempts to limit individual and community solar energy projects—Alex Baumhardt, *Oregon Capital Chronicle* September 3, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

## **Washington State News**

### **Washington: Solar Farm Planned at Old Plutonium Weapons Site**

The U.S. Department of Energy is entering negotiations with a Chicago corporation to build one of the largest solar and battery storage energy projects in the nation at the site where plutonium-powered nuclear weapons for the Cold War were made – the Hanford site in southeastern Washington... “Since the beginning of the Biden-Harris Administration, we’ve added nearly 90 gigawatts of solar capacity to the grid – enough to power roughly 13 million homes – and we’re building on this historic progress with another massive solar project,” said Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm—*Environment News Service*, August 6, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Solar Panels at Orting Veterans Village**

The Orting Veterans Village, located in Pierce County, provides permanent supportive housing to 35 once chronically homeless veterans, organized in a self-supporting residential community. Opened in early 2021, the tiny home complex is owned and managed by the 501c3 nonprofit organization New Horizon Communities, which is dedicated to building safe, sustainable, and quality housing for those experiencing homelessness—Olympia Community Solar [for] *New Horizon Communities*, August 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Solar Panels Help Federal Way’s El Centro Skate Rink Save Money**

The lights and sounds of the El Centro Skate Rink in Federal Way will now be partially powered by the sun, thanks to a new solar array unveiled on Aug. 1. Local leaders and representatives from El Centro de la Raza, Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Sphere Solar joined community members for a ribbon cutting at the rink... Estela Ortega, executive director of El Centro de la Raza, shared her appreciation for the grant and for PSE’s commitment to being a carbon-neutral company by 2030, saying “this commitment helps

to create infrastructure for a more inclusive carbon free future—Keelin Everly-Lang, *Kent Reporter*, August 9, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Housing, Aging, Solar: Three Projects in Clark County Honored by State**

Three Clark County projects were among the 12 winners of the 2024 Governor’s Smart Communities Awards, which recognize local governments and partners for exceptional land-use planning and development... [The Community Solar East project](#), a collaboration between the Port of Camas-Washougal and Clark Public Utilities to install \$1.4 million in solar panels on five industrial sites on port land, won a Smart Climate Strategies award following its completion earlier this year—Alexis Weisend, *The Columbian*, August 13, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Washington Solar Project Paused Amid Concern about Indigenous Sites**

A company developing an industrial-scale solar panel array on Badger Mountain in Eastern Washington has paused permitting activities on the project amid concerns about impacts to Indigenous cultural sites... The decision comes on the heels of an [investigation by High Country News and ProPublica this year](#), which found that a land survey funded by the developer, Avangrid Renewables, had omitted more than a dozen sites of archaeological or cultural significance on the public parcel included in the project area. This survey is required by the state before it can permit the project so construction can begin—B. “Toastie” Oaster, *High Country News*, August 12, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **New \$75M Eastern WA Lab will Fast Track Next-Gen Battery Storage Research**

A one-of-a-kind laboratory opened in the Tri-Cities on Tuesday, bringing together some of the world's most respected researchers to work toward a speedy solution to large-scale energy storage issues. Pacific Northwest National Laboratory was picked in a Department of Energy competition for a nationwide center, the Grid Storage Launchpad, for advancing storing energy in batteries at the electrical grid scale—Annette Cary, *Yakima Herald-Republic*, August 13, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Tumwater Prepares Pioneer Park for New Solar Station to Charge Electric Cars, E-Bikes and Wheelchair Batteries**

Tumwater’s [Pioneer Park](#) will be home to the city’s new solar-powered station that can charge electric cars, e-bikes and wheelchair batteries, free to the public. This grid-independent solar unit is scheduled to be deployed in the next six months... For at least the next six years, the charging station will be free to use, reducing barriers to access for electric vehicle owners, electric wheelchair users, and e-bike riders. Following the end of the six-year grant, the city has the option of assessing a charging fee—Nancy Krier, *Thurston Talk*, August 19, 2024: [Click here for more information](#).

### **State Council Releases Revised Horse Heaven Clean Energy Project Proposal**

A proposed wind and solar energy project in southeastern Washington may finally be nearing the end of a long journey towards final approval from Gov. Jay Inslee’s Office after numerous delays regarding its size and environmental protections—TJ Martinell, *The Center Square*, August 20, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Spokane County Commissioners Move to Regulate Wind, Solar Farms as Interest Grows in Eastern Washington**

As energy companies continue to eye large wind farms in Eastern Washington, Spokane County commissioners are setting the terms for what they'll look like within the county's borders. The commissioners voted 3-1 Tuesday afternoon to direct county staff to write legislation dictating the location and operation of large scale wind turbine and solar panel facilities, after county staff briefed them on the issue and presented [a draft of the regulations](#) that same morning. The move to pass the county's first ordinance regulating large scale renewable energy projects comes on the heels of recent efforts by energy companies to put commercial wind farms in Spokane, Whitman and Lincoln counties—Nick Gibson, *Spokesman Review*, August 22, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Community Solar Project Wins Statewide Award**

Clark Public Utilities' (CPU) Community Solar East, a 799-kilowatt solar array at the Port of Camas-Washougal's industrial park, has been selected as one of 12 winners of the 2024 Washington State Department of Commerce (DOC) Governor's Smart Communities awards, which recognize local governments and their partners for exceptional land use planning and development—Doug Flanagan, *Camus-Washougal Post-Record*, August 22, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Officials Approve Plan to Someday Dismantle Ostrea Solar Site in Yakima County**

State officials gave a look ahead this week for anyone wondering what might happen in several decades, when the large solar power projects being built and planned in Yakima County are scheduled to be dismantled... Before its construction has even begun, a site restoration plan for the Ostrea solar project in Yakima County was approved during Wednesday's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council monthly meeting. ...The project near the Silver Dollar Café, just west of the SR 24 and SR 241 intersection in the county's northeast corner, was [approved](#) with the adjacent High Top solar facility in April 2023—Joel Donofrio, *Yakima Herald-Republic*, August 26, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Scout CEO: Inslee 'Must' Override EFSEC if Needed**

Scout Clean Energy CEO Michael Rucker has called on Washington Gov. Jay Inslee to overrule the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council and remove obstacles to building the Horse Heaven wind and solar project....In a letter to EFSEC voting members this week, Rucker criticized a proposal presented by staff planners that could restrict where windmills, solar and batteries are placed on rolling hills near the Tri-Cities—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, August 30, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **EFSEC Resets Horse Heaven Vote: Windmill Layout Wild Card**

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council has rescheduled a vote on the Horse Heaven wind and solar project in southeast Washington for 8 a.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4. The meeting will be online. The council postponed a vote set for Aug. 29 because one member was absent—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, September 3, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

## **National News and Beyond**

### **Tracking the Sun: Pricing and Design Trends for Distributed Photovoltaic Systems in the United States, 2024 Edition**

Berkeley Lab's annual *Tracking the Sun* report describes trends among grid-connected, distributed solar photovoltaic (PV) and paired PV+storage systems in the United States. For the purpose of this report,

distributed solar includes residential systems, roof-mounted non-residential systems, and ground-mounted systems up to 5 MW-AC—Galen L. Barbose, Naïm R Darghouth, Eric O'Shaughnessy, Sydney Forrester, NREL, August 2024: [Click here to read more and access the report.](#)

### **Bill Aims to Cut 45X Tax Credits for Chinese Solar Makers**

A bipartisan group of U.S. lawmakers introduced the American Tax Dollars for American Solar Manufacturing Act, aiming to prevent Chinese solar module manufacturers from claiming subsidies for their American factories....The Inflation Reduction Act, passed in 2022, offers manufacturing 45 X tax credits for solar components made in America. While the lucrative tax credits have been attracting clean energy manufacturers worldwide to build factories in the U.S., the fact that some of the new manufacturing facilities are from Chinese companies has created a controversy that this new bill aims to solve—Anne Fischer, *pv magazine*, August 1, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Why the U.S. Government is Spending \$7 Billion on Solar for Low-Income Homes**

On a hot afternoon in a suburb of San Francisco, Hugo Salas stands in the middle of the street looking up at the reason why his electric bills are so low... Salas has solar panels on his rooftop, which he got through [a nonprofit program](#) designed for low-income households. Salas, an ironworker, didn't pay anything for the panels — except for the Peruvian food his wife made for the workers who installed the panels....The nonprofit that gave Salas the panels is called GRID Alternatives, and it, [along with other awardees](#), is about to get a big boost from the federal government. Later this summer, the Environmental Protection Agency expects to begin distributing \$7 billion through its "[Solar for All](#)" grants—Julia Simon, NPR, August 1, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **'The Sky is the Limit': Solar Program Opens New Opportunities for Chicago Trainees**

Darryl Moton is ready to "get on a roof."...The 25-year-old Chicago resident is among the latest graduates of an intensive 13-week solar training course that's helping to connect employers with job candidates from underrepresented backgrounds....He and others interviewed for jobs with a dozen employers assembled at a church on Chicago's West Side on August 1 as part of the fourth training cohort for the 548 Foundation, which is partnering with Illinois Gov. J .B. Pritzker on a [recently-announced \\$30 million initiative](#) to create 1,000 solar jobs in Chicago's South and West side neighborhoods.Kari Lydersen, *Renewable Energy World*, August 12, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **SEIA Statement on President Biden Action to Support U.S. Manufacturers by Raising Section 201 Tariff Rate Quota on Imported Solar Cells**

Last night, President Biden issued a proclamation to raise the Section 201 tariff rate quota (TRQ) for imported solar cells from 5 gigawatts (GW) annually to 12.5 GW. The TRQ increase to 12.5 GW is retroactive for cells imported on or after August 1, 2024...."SEIA strongly commends President Biden's decisive action to support American solar module manufacturers by raising the Section 201 tariff rate quota on cells. This move provides an important bridge for module producers to access the supply they need while the United States continues to progress on solar cell manufacturing—SEIA, [Press release], August 13, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Thin Film Solar Deployed in Biggest-Ever Solar Farm in the US East**

New thin film solar technology has been a long time breaking into widespread use compared to

traditional silicon solar modules, but the day is finally coming, along with the promise of lower costs and a smaller environmental footprint. Coincidentally or not, the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 is here to help. The latest example is the gigantic 800-megawatt Double Black Diamond solar farm in Illinois, sporting thin film solar modules from the US firm First Solar and a financial assist from the IRA—Tina Casey, *Clean Technica*, August 21, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **“Hit Me with you Sun Shot “ Photo Contest Winners**

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Solar Energy Technologies Office (SETO) [announced the 18 winners of the American-Made Solar Photo Competition: Hit Me with Your Sun Shot](#). Photographers, including professionals and amateurs, submitted awe-inspiring photos that showcase solar energy technologies, infrastructure, and research and development activities—U.S.DOE, *EERE Bulletin*, August 21, 2024: [Click here to read more and view photos](#).

### **PV Floor’s Walkable Panels Put Solar Underfoot in Both Residential & Commercial Applications**

Turkey’s largest solar manufacturer, Ankara Solar, recently came out with a line of walkable solar panels, which have a durable non-slip glass surface, that can be installed in floors and open areas both inside and out. Ankara Solar’s PV Floor is a [building-integrated photovoltaic](#) option for developers, architects, and builders looking to maximize sustainability and on-site energy efficiency—Derek Markham *Clean Technica*, August 27, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Clean Energy Jobs Grew at Double the Rate of Overall US Employment in 2023: Report**

The clean energy sector added 142,000 jobs in 2023, accounting for more than half of new energy jobs and growing at a rate more than twice as large as that for the rest of the energy sector and the U.S. economy overall—Sean Wolfe, *Renewable Energy World*, August 28, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

## **Agrivoltaics**

### **The Evolving Art and Science of Agrivoltaics**

At Bluewave, integrating solar technology with traditional farming practices isn’t just a concept, it’s the new standard. Jesse Robertson-DuBois, director of sustainable solar development, shares insights on the transformative journey of agrivoltaics within the industry....“The first approach on a project is ‘How can we accommodate agrivoltaics?’ It’s the first thing we do in development—John Fitzgerald Weaver, *pv magazine*, July 31, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Agrivoltaics — Use It Where It Works, Don’t Use It Where It Doesn’t**

Agrivoltaics is a fancy name for the combination of solar panels and farming. Growing food and raising farm animals are both about harvesting the energy of the sun. So are solar farms. In some cases, they can be combined to increase the total productivity of land, which benefits human society and puts more money in the pockets of farmers. In other cases, the synergy between solar and farming is less successful. The trick is knowing which is which. Several recent developments suggest there are more positive use cases for agrivoltaics than previously thought—Steve Hanley, *Clean Technica*, August 18, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **The Impact of Semi-Transparent Solar Modules on Agrivoltaics Yield**

Researchers have conducted a field study across two growing seasons, growing different kinds of vegetables under three types of modules with 40%, 5%, and 0% transparency. Their work is the first replicated research experiment that evaluates module transparency in an irrigated vegetable field setting—Lior Kahana, *pv magazine*, August 22, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Bureau of Land Management releases proposed Western Solar Plan**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) today announced its [proposed roadmap](#) for solar energy development on public lands, designed to expand efficient and environmentally responsible solar project permitting on public lands across the West. Today's release of the Final Utility-Scale Solar Energy Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Proposed Resource Management Plan Amendments (also known as the proposed updated Western Solar Plan), comes as the Biden-Harris administration releases new data to demonstrate how it has [improved federal permitting processes](#) to help deliver more projects, more efficiently, across the United States—Bureau of Land Management, [Press Release], August 29, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

## **Community Solar**

### **Foundations of Community Solar Development: Free Online Course**

Foundations of Community Solar Development is a free, asynchronous, online course designed to support the accelerated development of community solar. It is modeled after the Community Power Accelerator instructor-led [Learning Lab: Community Solar Development](#) which, as of August 2024, has trained more than 150 individuals across six cohorts. Demand for the Learning Lab course has consistently exceeded capacity constraints, prompting the development of its widely accessible, self-paced model—University of New Hampshire, Casey School of Public Policy: [Click here for more information](#).

### **Evaluating Community Solar as a Measure to Promote Equitable Clean Energy Access**

Rooftop and community solar are alternative product classes for residential solar in the United States. Community solar, where multiple households buy solar from shared systems, could make solar more accessible by reducing initial costs and removing adoption barriers for renters and multifamily building occupants—Eric O'Shaughnessy... [et al.], *Nature Energy*, June 3, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Piecing Together the Community Solar Puzzle**

The rapid growth of community solar is changing the renewable energy landscape, making solar energy more accessible and equitable to homeowners, renters, and businesses, while offering lucrative opportunities for developers and investors ...Throughout the last decade, dozens of states have enacted legislation that enables community solar. The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 was the most monumental piece of renewable energy legislation in U.S. history, demonstrating support for clean energy on a federal level. The demand for community solar is clear, but heightened demand comes with challenges—Nate Owen, *Renewable Energy World*, August 21, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

## **Conferences, Webinars and other Upcoming Events**

### **Solarize Deschutes: August 15-October 31**

Solarize Deschutes is a time-limited campaign making installing solar easier and more affordable for Deschutes County residents! The Environmental Center, Energize Bend, Envision Bend and the City of Bend have teamed up with Energy Trust of Oregon and Solar Oregon to make it easy and more affordable for homeowners to go solar. Any homeowner with a Deschutes County address is eligible to participate. Just request a bid between Aug. 15 and Oct. 31; your solar installation can be completed any time through June 30, 2025. [Click here to learn more.](#)

### **RE+ 24: Renewing What's Possible : Anaheim, CA September 9-12, 2024**

Registration is now open! Get ready for an incredible week at the Anaheim Convention Center & Campus as RE+ celebrates its 20th Anniversary year. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **Using Community Solar to Cut Energy Burdens in Manufactured Mobile Home Communities : Webinar, September 18**

Manufactured homes (aka “mobile” homes) are an important form of affordable housing for low- and moderate-income (LMI) households. But they can often be energy-inefficient and difficult to weatherize, resulting in high energy bills and energy burdens. Community solar can be a promising way to address these problems ... In this Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) webinar we will hear about the research from Berkeley Lab researcher Bentham Paulos. He will be joined by Jeannie Oliver of the New Hampshire Community Loan Fund and Hunter VanRiper of the Michigan EGLE—[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **An Introduction to Solar+Storage : Webinar, September 19**

In this webinar, speakers from Clean Energy Group will answer some of the most commonly asked questions about the design, installation, and economics of solar and battery storage for homes, businesses, and community facilities—[Click here to read more and to register.](#)

### **Tribal-State Collaboration on Sustainability and Solar Development: A Case Study of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe: Webinar, September 23**

In this CESA webinar, Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe’s Brandy Toft and Eugene Strowbridge will provide an overview of a forthcoming case study exploring the Tribal-State relationship through the experiences of the Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe, which began developing its Sustainability Program in 2014—[Click here to read more and to register.](#)

### **Dept. of Energy Solar Energy Technology Office. Equitable Solar Communities of Practice Program Webinars**

The [Equitable Solar Communities of Practice](#) is hosting a [series of webinars](#) this fall. These webinars will explore the best practices and lessons learned from the each of the five communities of practice. Members of the lead organizations will share their insights on the challenges and opportunities associated with scaling equitable solar across the United States. Click on the session titles below for times and to register.

- [Solar Workforce](#) – Sept 25
- [Resilience, Storage, and Grid Benefits](#) – Oct 8
- [Equitable Access and Consumer Protections](#) – Oct 17



- [Community-led Economic Development](#) – Oct 23
- [Meaningful Household Savings](#) – Oct 30

### **Collaboration Between Community-Based Organizations and State Energy Agencies: Finds and Lessons from the Solar with Justice Project : Webinar, September 27, 2024**

This CESA webinar will cover a series of reports released by CESA and MIT in August based on a nationwide survey of community-based organizations. Report authors will review key findings and lessons learned from the studies—[Click here to read more and to register](#).

### **ASES National Solar Tour : October 4-6, 2024**

Hosted by the [American Solar Energy Society \(ASES\)](#) for over 29 years, the purpose of the National Solar Tour is to promote renewable energy awareness and increase the adoption of solar energy. The National Solar Tour centers around neighborhood discussions about solar. In person and virtually throughout the year. [Click here for more information](#).

### **2024 Washington State Solar Summit : Shoreline Community College : October 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 and to register](#).

### **Oregon Solar + Storage Conference : Portland Crowne Plaza, October 22-24, 2024**

Registration is now open for the 2024 Oregon Solar + Storage Conference! OSSIA members can receive an extra 5% discount - on top of the OSSIA member 30% discount! Early bird discount ends August 15th so register now! [Click here for more information and to register](#).

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