



## April 2025

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 previous *Solar Newsbriefs*, visit

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## Oregon News

### Construction Underway on SOU's Latest Solar Projects

Southern Oregon University is making headway in its march toward becoming the first public university in the U.S. to produce all of the daytime electricity used on its campus, with more than \$5 million in recent state, federal and student funding and multiple solar projects underway. SOU completed a rooftop solar installation on Lithia Motors Pavilion in July, with the project adding a 241 kilowatt solar array to the 63 kilowatt array already located on the athletic pavilion's roof – making it the largest rooftop solar array in Ashland. SOU's next project – a solar array and battery storage bank – will begin this month at The Hawk Dining Commons—Southern Oregon University, *Campus News* [Press Release], January 15, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### Mt. Hood Town Hall Prepares for Solar Installation

With funding from the Oregon Department of Energy, Mt. Hood Town Hall is preparing for a solar installation project. The project aims to create resilient power and an on-site storage system in case of power outages. Hood River County's Energy Council identified Mt. Hood Town Hall as a critical facility for community resources and support, primarily for the Upper Hood River Valley—Laurel Brown, *Columbia Gorge News*, February 11, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### Oregon Introduces Legislation To Expand Community Solar Program

Oregon State Senator [Janeen Sollman](#) (District 15), Chair of the [Senate Energy and Environment Committee](#), has introduced [SB 92](#), a bill that would expand and improve the state's existing community solar program by increasing capacity, the flexibility of project locations and customer subscriptions, and incentivizing battery storage for community resilience—CCSA, [Press Release], February 21, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### Oregon's Community Solar Program in Danger of Dying without Changes, Backers Say

Portland will soon see the launch of its first full-sized community solar project nearly a decade after the Legislature approved the statewide program to provide clean energy and help low-income ratepayers at the same time... But it may be the last one in the city unless supporters convince lawmakers to expand and improve the program, beset by delays, recalcitrant power companies and limits on

capacity...The [PDX Community Solar Project](#) on three acres of Port of Portland land near the airport will produce just under 1 megawatt of power – a tiny amount compared to the hundreds of megawatts generated by [utility-scale solar projects](#) – and will reduce the electricity bills of 150 low-income households in the city’s Cully neighborhood—Gosia Wozniacka, *OregonLive*, March 3, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Oregon Lawmakers Eye Solar Panels in Irrigation Pivot Corners**

Oregon land use regulators would study installing solar panels in unused irrigation pivot corners under a bill meant to boost revenues for farmers facing groundwater restrictions. House Bill 3346 would direct the Department of Land Conservation and Development to examine siting renewable energy facilities within the state’s seven “critical groundwater areas,” where irrigation can be curtailed to mitigate aquifer depletion—Mateusz Perkowski, *Capital Press*, March 5, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Trump Funding Uncertainty Threatens Rapid Bus Plan, Other Portland Climate Projects**

Several major climate projects planned by Portland’s clean energy fund, including a significant remake of 82nd Avenue, are at risk because it’s unclear whether millions of dollars from the federal government will materialize as expected... Some of the projects rely on a federal match to cover up to half of the cost but the money – especially for work focused on climate, clean energy and communities of color – is now uncertain as the Trump administration reviews whether the proposals align with the president’s agenda, said Eric Engstrom, interim director of the Portland Bureau of Planning and Sustainability—Gosia Wozniacka, *OregonLive*, March 19, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

## **Washington State News**

### **Washington Island Church Goes Solar Thanks to New Credits for Nonprofits**

On Vashon Island in Washington State, across from Seattle, the Vashon United Methodist Church (UMC) recently received elective pay (a.k.a. direct pay) funds in lieu of federal clean energy tax credits for its installed solar and battery storage devices. This helped cover about a third of the costs of the installation, with the other two-thirds covered by a \$130,000 Washington State Department of Commerce Solar plus Storage for Resilient Communities program grant that Vashon UMC won back in September 2023. The federal credit and state grant helped the church install 30 kilowatts (kW) of solar panels and six battery storage devices in two church-owned buildings—Miguel Yañez-Barnuevo, *Environmental Energy Study Institute*, January 27, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### **Lawmakers Look at Small-Scale Solar to Spare Washington Farmland**

A House bill proposes electric utilities get more power from small solar projects, likely increasing electric rates, but preserving farmland. House Bill 1847 would require utilities to acquire 10% of their renewable energy from small, customer-owned projects, known as distributed energy resources... But solar panels on commercial and state buildings, warehouses and along highways west of the Cascade Range could help the state reach its goal of carbon-free power with less loss of farmland, Dogilo said at a recent hearing—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, February 13, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### **This Yakima Church is Getting an Upgrade to its Energy Infrastructure**

Nestled near a Starbucks and several banks in downtown Yakima is a stone church that's nearly 140 years old. Even though the building has sat on this corner for so long, St. Michael's Episcopal Mission congregants are planning some updates. Now, they're working to upgrade its energy infrastructure. Since this past December, St. Michael's has installed 72 solar panels, with more in the works. It's also adding in 36 modular batteries, which means the church could last several days without needing the grid, said priest David Hacker—Courtney Flatt, Northwest Public Broadcasting, February 18, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **The Obscure State Agency that Referees WA's Green Energy Battles**

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council has power to overrule local zoning laws – putting it at the center of a backlash to renewable energy... Benton County's Board of Commissioners passed a ban on solar and wind energy projects throughout much of the county in 2021, justifying the moratorium as protecting "prime farmland." But local officials lack final say over such projects. That authority often instead lies with Washington's [Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council](#) (EFSEC), a central agency with the power to recommend approval or denial of projects statewide—Brandon Block, *Cascade PBS News*, March 4, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Pea Patch Community Campus Update March 10: Project Updates and Presentation on Solar Microgrid Study**

The Pea Patch Community Campus continues to take shape behind the scenes with site planning, permitting and preparations for a fundraising campaign. Please join us for a report on the project and a presentation on the study underway to include a solar and battery microgrid to offset the power usage on the campus... On March 10 at 5:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall at Emmanuel Episcopal Church, the Săzăn Group, engineering consultants, will present its progress to date and answer questions about the solar microgrid—Submitted by the Pea Patch Community Campus, *The Islands' Sounder*, March 6, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Work Starts on Biggest Solar Farm in US at Hanford Nuclear Site**

The Hanford site was a nuclear weapons production and waste storage complex in Benton County between 1943 and 1989. A multi-decade decontamination project has been underway since. Hecate will have access to land deemed safe enough to install 3.45 million photovoltaic panels capable of generating 2GW, approximately enough to supply all the homes in Seattle, San Francisco, and Denver. The \$4bn project includes a further 2GW worth of battery storage—Rod Sweet, *Global Construction Review*, March 6, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Eastside Climate Partnership Launches Solarize Eastside for Homes, Businesses**

The [Eastside Climate Partnership](#)— a collaboration between the cities of Redmond, Bellevue, Issaquah, Kirkland, Mercer Island, and Sammamish that works to reduce climate pollution and advance sustainability — has announced a program to help Eastside communities install solar panels on homes and businesses: Solarize Eastside... Residents from the partner cities can sign up for a free solar assessment of their homes or businesses through July 4 at [SolarizeEastside.org](#). Registrants will receive

a detailed solar proposal at a reduced rate from a partner solar installer and schedule panel installation. Puget Sound Cooperative Credit Union is offering special financing to help reduce panel costs for participants, according to a news release from the city of Redmond—John Stearns, *425 Business*, March 7, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Solarize Island County is Open for Enrollment**

Kicking Gas recently announced the launch of Solarize Island County, a solar energy program available now through July 4, according to a press release. The program will support residents of Island County to install solar panels on their homes and businesses. Residents can reserve free solar assessments at [SolarizeIsland.org](http://SolarizeIsland.org). Solarize Island County will be doing a free public workshop at 6 p.m. on April 17 at the Front Room at the Bayview Cash Store—*South Whidbey Record*, March 7, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **WA Ranchers Turn to New Crop: Solar Power**

For four generations, the Robert family ranch has been in the business of raising cattle or sheep. The family's livestock grazes on the hillside during summer, before settling on the flats of the valley in the winter. Decades ago, water in the area was so plentiful for growing hay and wheat that it would bubble up or even shoot into the sky from wells. But over the decades, the water line has fallen by hundreds of feet in this Central Washington landscape... Now a new crop will take center stage at the Roberts' ranch: the sunlight itself... The Robert family and a neighboring private landowner have agreed to lease nearly 6,000 acres of land to Innergex, a renewable-energy company that plans to install a sea of glittering solar panels with 400 megawatts of capacity, enough to power 70,000 homes. It would be one of Washington's largest solar farms—Amanda Zhou, *The Seattle Times*, March 9, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Wind and Solar Projects Gain Traction in Garfield County as Moratorium Expires**

Several renewable energy projects are on the horizon after Garfield County's moratorium on wind farms lifted last month, while neighboring Whitman County continues to hold off on such projects as it drafts new rules for them following local opposition—James Hanlon, *Spokesman-Review*, March 10, 2025: [Click here to read more.](#)

### **Puget Sound Energy Launches Innovative Solar Program for Multi-Unit Buildings**

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) launched "Multi-Occupant Solar," a pioneering program that transforms how tenants of multi-unit buildings can access and benefit from solar energy. This groundbreaking initiative addresses a long-standing barrier in clean energy adoption by enabling customers to share in the advantages of on-site solar power where they live and work... "Multi-Occupant Solar represents a significant step forward in making clean energy accessible to all members of our community," said PSE Director of Customer Energy Innovation, John Mannetti. "For the first time, residents who live in multi-unit buildings can directly and easily benefit from solar energy generated on their buildings, regardless

of whether they own or rent." The program introduces several innovative features:

- Property owners can install solar arrays that benefit multiple building occupants
- Solar energy credits can be distributed across multiple tenant utility bills
- Both residential and commercial multi-unit properties are eligible
- Increased local clean energy capacity while reducing electricity costs for participants

Puget Sound Energy, [Press Release], March 25, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

## Greater Pacific Northwest and National News

### How Walmart, Amazon Are Harnessing the Power of Solar

Solar and renewable energy projects are becoming an increasingly important avenues for retailers to make a positive impact in the communities they serve, and both Walmart and Amazon are making strides in the segment... For its part, Walmart is working with Nexamp to develop 31 community solar projects across Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Illinois and Minnesota. The projects will generate more than 120 Megawatts of renewable energy for the grid, while also providing millions of dollars in consumer savings for local businesses and thousands of residential customers... Amazon, meanwhile, was recently named the largest corporate purchaser of renewable energy globally for the fifth year in a row by Bloomberg NEF. The company has supported more than 600 wind and solar projects to date, which would be capable of powering the equivalent of 8.3 million U.S. homes—Emily Crowe, *Progressive Grocer*, February 13, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### Community Solar Up 42%, C&I Up 18%, Residential Down 25%

Distributed solar installations in the U.S. declined 11% in 2024, weighed down by a 25% drop in residential solar, or [possibly as much as 31%](#), compared to 2023. However, according to Ohm Analytics, commercial and industrial (C&I) solar and community solar bucked the trend, growing by 18% and 42%, respectively. Community solar saw particularly strong momentum in the fourth quarter, surging 72% year-over-year—John Fitzgerald Weaver, *pV magazine*, March 17, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

### Nationwide Net Metering Shifts: Let's Assess the Myths and Impact of Changing Solar Compensation

Net-metering policies, which have been instrumental in the growth of residential solar across the United States, are undergoing dramatic changes nationwide. These policies—which allow solar customers to receive credit for the electricity they contribute to the grid—are being reduced or eliminated in state after state, often [at the urging of utility companies](#)... Why is net metering important?—Matt Powers, *Solar Builder*, March 24, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

## Agrivoltaics

### Are These Smart Solar Panels the Future of Sustainable Vineyards?

Agrivoltaics, a new solar paneling system designed to support agriculture while providing green energy, has shown positive results in vineyards around the world—but its high cost and depleted federal funding is slowing its uptake in the U.S.—Betsy Andrews, *Seven Fifty Daily*, March 20, 2025: [Click here to read more](#).

## Reports

### Rural Solar Rights

Utility-scale solar projects on private land – the fastest-growing form of energy development in the United States today – generate low-cost, carbon-free electricity and can invigorate rural economies. However, they are also attracting unprecedented local opposition as municipal governments across the country adopt ordinances prohibiting or severely restricting solar farm development within their jurisdictions. Fortunately, state legislatures have multiple means of preventing municipal governments from unreasonably restricting solar energy—Troy A Rule, *Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law Paper*, March 17, 2025: [Click here to read abstract and access report](#).

## Upcoming Conferences and Webinars

### How to Solar + Storage : Webinar April 2

In this workshop, Solar Oregon will answer your questions about how solar energy and battery systems work and help you take the first step to add solar to your home or business. [Click here for more information and to reserve a spot](#).

### Solar for All Public Briefing : Webinar April 2

Join the Washington State Department of Commerce for a virtual presentation to hear updates on residential solar program. Commerce will present information on new and expanded solar programs for income-qualified households, disadvantaged communities and tribes. [Click here for more information and to register](#).

## Olympia Community Solar Upcoming Solarize Events

Learn more about how solar energy works, solar incentives, and what to expect from a Solarize program. Solarize campaigns are designed to encourage community members to switch to solar energy by addressing common barriers to its adoption. Typically organized by local governments, energy committees, or third-party organizations, these campaigns offer group discounts on installations, access to informational resources, and support throughout the process for participants.

- Solarize Eastside Workshop (Redmond) – April 3
- Solarize Eastside Workshop (Mercer Island) – April 5
- Solarize Eastside Workshop (Kirkland) – April 8
- Solarize Kenmore Workshop – April 10
- Solarize Skagit Workshop – April 10
- Solarize Whatcom Workshop – April 14
- Solarize Island County Workshop – April 17
- Solarize Eastside Workshop (Sammamish) – April 23
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[Click here for more detailed information](#) on the workshops listed above.

### **Solar Panel Recycling: Free Virtual Presentation : Webinar April 8**

In this free webinar, presented by Solar Oregon, you'll learn everything you need to know to be prepared when your solar panels reach the end of their life. We will discuss the current state of solar panel recycling in Oregon, options to dispose or donate unwanted panels, provide resources so you can be prepared when your solar panels need to be decommissioned, and look towards the future of how solar panel recycling may evolve moving forward. [Click here for more information and get tickets.](#)

### **Energy Resilience for Medically Vulnerable Multifamily Affordable Housing Residents: A Technoeconomic Analysis for Connecticut : Webinar April 10**

This Clean Energy States Alliance webinar provides an overview of the "Resilient Solar+Storage" training materials and course content, which includes the basics of solar+storage, evaluating a potential project, exploring financing and ownership options, and working with project development partners—[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **Green Energy Series#26: Renewable Energy Policy in OR : A 2025 Perspective: Webinar April 10**

Solar Oregon is presenting a Green Energy series - free talks for those interested in learning more about the technologies and design of zero energy buildings. Solar Oregon is a non-profit educational organization leading the way to a clean energy future. These one-hour seminars will explore solar, energy storage, and energy-efficient equipment and design. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **Microgrid Knowledge 2025 Conference : Dallas, TX April 15-17**

Energize. Empower. Enlighten. Explore the latest trends, technologies, and strategies shaping the future of resilient and sustainable power at the Microgrid Knowledge Conference. From expert insights to hands-on case studies, this is the must-attend event for professionals driving the energy transition. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **A Climate Resilient Energy Code for Multifamily Affordable Housing : Webinar April 29**

In this webinar, panelists from Clean Energy Group and New Buildings Institute will detail the why, how, and what of the [draft Connecticut Climate Resilient Energy Code](#), a voluntary stretch building code developed to cover the installation of climate resilient energy systems, such as solar and energy storage, to power essential services during grid outages at multifamily affordable housing properties—[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **Spring 2025 Clean & Affordable Energy Conference : Missoula, May 7**

Join the NW Energy Coalition this spring in Missoula for our Clean & Affordable Energy Conference! [Click here for more information and to register.](#)



### **Solar Oregon Solar 13th Annual Wine Tour : May 10**

The tour will include stops at multiple wineries or farms for tastings. Lunch is included. Here are some tour highlights:

- Award-Winning [Roserock Wine](#)
- [Our Table Farm & Lettuce Shine](#) Presentation
- Woman-Owned [Patton Valley Wine](#)
- Others to be announced!

[Click here for more information and to purchase tickets.](#)

### **Oregon Solar + Storage Conference : Portland, OR : May 13-15**

The Oregon Solar + Storage Conference, a beloved regional event, is set to reach new heights this year. With over 500 attendees last year, we're anticipating an even larger turnout for the upcoming event, scheduled for May 13-15 2025 at the Crowne Plaza Portland (near the convention center).

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **RE+ Northwest : Tacoma, June 11-12**

Co-located with Green Transportation Summit & Expo. RE+ Northwest 2025 will be held June 11 – 12, 2025, at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center. Meet with regional and national companies, understand cutting-edge policy, trends, and know-how, and connect with colleagues from your region.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **2025 Community Solar Innovation Summit : Denver, CO June 26-27**

The only national conference put on by the community solar industry for the community solar industry.

[Click here for more information and to register.](#)

### **ASES Solar 2025: Innovation for Universal Renewable Energy Access : University of Colorado, Boulder, CO August 4-6**

This year's conference, themed "Innovation for Universal Renewable Energy Access," will explore the latest, most impactful, cutting-edge practices, policies, and technologies driving the just and equitable transformation in the U.S. and worldwide to a carbon-free global energy economy. Click here for more information. [Click here for more information.](#)



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