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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

An Oregon Utility's Unique Model for Supporting Clean Energy Goals

Portland General Electric (PGE) in Oregon manages a two-year-old program it hopes will accelerate the speed of renewable deployment in the state. It also may be a model for how other utilities can help customers choose clean energy. The Green Future Impact (GFI) program provides an avenue for large companies and cities to choose renewable energy. The program acts as a platform, so far supporting two procurement models: aggregate PPAs and corporate PPAs. Read more: Sarah Golden, *Green Biz*, Mar. 19, 2021: <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/oregon-utility-unique-model-supporting-clean-energy-goals>

Portland's Massive Clean Energy Fund Set to Bankroll First Projects for Communities of Color, Marginalized Residents

Dozens of Portland nonprofits are poised to become the first recipients of a massive, voter-approved program that seeks to bankroll clean energy projects and jobs geared toward the city's historically marginalized communities. The City Council next week will decide whether to approve 45 grant proposals recommended by committee members of the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund. Those proposals include everything from energy retrofits for Black homeowners to rooftop gardens run by a local yoga studio, [documents released Friday show](#)—Shane Dixon Kavanaugh, *The Oregonian/OregonLive*, Mar. 26, 2021: <https://www.oregonlive.com/politics/2021/03/portlands-massive-clean-energy-fund-set-to-bankroll-first-projects-for-communities-of-color-marginalized-residents.html>

SPI Energy Partners with Common Energy to Connect New Community Solar Projects to the Oregon Electrical Grid

SPI Energy Co., Ltd., a global renewable energy company and provider of solar storage and electric vehicle (EV) solutions for business, residential, government, logistics and utility customers and investors, today announced that it has partnered with Common Energy to subscribe customers to SPI's six community solar projects in the Portland General Electric (PGE) territory in the greater Portland, Oregon area. SPI's Oregon solar project portfolio is participating under the state's new Community Solar Program, which was established by the Oregon state legislature in 2016—*APNews*, Mar. 15, 2021: <https://apnews.com/press-release/accesswire/business-technology-renewable-power-generation-alternative-and-sustainable-energy-products-and-services-7c19e03df333ef5afcb4417d765b05a3>

Washington

Grid Modernization under the Clean Energy Fund (CEF)

\$4.6 million is available in a new round of grant funding. Since 2013, state investments have encouraged public-private partnerships on a diverse range of projects, leading the way in electrical grid modernization. This program provides funding for Washington electric utilities for Grid Modernization projects that advance clean, renewable energy technologies and transmission and distribution control systems; support integration of renewable energy sources, deployment of distributed energy resources, and sustainable microgrids; or increase utility customer choice in energy sources, efficiency, equipment and utility services. Applications are due by 5:00 p.m. PST on May 18, 2021. For more information see: Washington State Department of Commerce. Energy Grid Modernization website: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/energy/clean-energy-fund/energy-grid-modernization/>

Pacific Northwest National Lab Gets Green Light to Design and Build a \$75M Grid Storage Facility

The [Pacific Northwest National Laboratory](#) (PNNL) will begin designing and building a \$75 million facility in Eastern Washington that will help develop massive batteries for grid energy storage. On Wednesday, Department of Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm gave departmental approval of the project, allowing an initiative nearly two years in the works to start taking shape. PNNL was chosen in August 2019 as the site of the national grid energy research facility, named the [Grid Storage Launchpad](#)—Lisa Stiffler, *GeekWire*, Mar. 11, 2021: <https://www.geekwire.com/2021/pacific-northwest-national-lab-gets-green-light-design-build-75m-grid-storage-facility/>

Affordable Housing Complex Spurling Court will Include Solar Power

Things are looking up, quite literally, as the city moves closer to the anniversary of the pandemic that changed the world. Thanks to a \$170,000 grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce and \$30,000 in matching funds from the city of Ellensburg, the affordable housing project Spurling Court will incorporate solar power. “Across the country, low-income communities rarely benefit from renewable energy projects,” said Andrew Lyons, HopeSource director of operations and manager of the grant—Rodney Harwood, *Daily Record*, Mar. 15, 2021: https://www.dailyrecordnews.com/monday/local_news/affordable-housing-complex-spurling-court-will-include-solar-power/article_e50099f0-5c97-57ac-9757-4aa011a19e29.html

Company Applies to Build Massive Solar, Wind Project on Farmland

A state council next week will have public hearings on plans to build solar panels and erect wind turbines on thousands of acres of farmland in Benton County in south-central Washington. Scout Clean Energy of Boulder, Colo., would lease 72,295 acres. While 6,860 acres would be “permanently impacted,” the rest could remain in agricultural production, according to the company’s application to the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council—*National Wind Watch*, Mar. 24, 2021: <https://www.wind-watch.org/news/2021/03/24/company-applies-to-build-massive-solar-wind-project-on-farmland/>

Comment: Washington can be a Shining Example for Solar Energy

Here in Washington, clean-energy siting is mostly focused on the sunny interior of the state, where it is already creating tough trade-offs, leading to bitter conflict in local communities. Even among staunch supporters of clean energy, however, there are reasonable concerns about solar panels stretched as far as the eye can see. This spring, state legislators in Olympia will have the opportunity to help resolve such conflicts. A proposed “Least Conflict Solar Siting” pilot project in the Columbia Basin would bring stakeholders together to openly state their preferences and acknowledge areas of agreement and disagreement, in order to map out areas where conflict is minimal—Deborah Jensen and Addie Candib, *HeraldNet*, Mar. 21, 2021: <https://www.heraldnet.com/opinion/comment-washington-can-be-a-shining-example-for-solar-energy/>

Companies Partner on Climate Pledge Arena Solar Projects Totaling 1.2MW

Excelsior Energy Capital (Excelsior), Unico Solar Investors (Unico Solar), Oak View Group and the Seattle Kraken have announced a partnership to equip Climate Pledge Arena with onsite solar arrays. The arrays which produce energy totaling 1.2 megawatts are a key component of the project’s commitment to becoming the first arena in the world to be net Zero Carbon certified by the International Living Future Institute (ILFI), a leading non-profit organization dedicated to advancing sustainable building practices—Robin Whitlock, *Renewable Energy*, Mar. 8, 2021: https://www.renewableenergymagazine.com/pv_solar/unico-solar-investors-excelsior-energy-capital-announce-20210308

Local Business Briefs: \$243,000 Grant to CCAP for Solar Installation

Commerce awards \$243,000 to CCAP for solar installation. Coastal Community Action Program has been awarded a \$243,000 grant to build a 121-kilowatt solar installation at its service center in Aberdeen. CCAP will use the energy savings from the project to offset energy costs and provide more services to qualified low-income households across Grays Harbor and Pacific counties: *The Daily World*, Mar. 1, 2021: <https://www.thedailyworld.com/business/local-business-briefs-243000-grant-to-ccap-for-solar-installation/>

National News

Senate Bill Would Give Clean Energy Companies Direct Access to Tax Credits

Three senators, Tom Carper (D-Del.), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), and Martin Heinrich (D-N.M.), [introduced a bill](#) that would allow for temporary refundability of section 45, 45Q, and 48 investment and production tax credits. The credits provide incentives for the private development of projects such as solar, wind, fuel cells, and carbon capture and sequestration—Tim Sylvia, *PV Magazine*, Mar. 26, 2021: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2021/03/26/senate-bill-would-give-clean-energy->

[companies-direct-access-to-tax-credits/](#)

Solar Workforce

Solar Ready Vets Network Looking for Transitioning Service Members and Veterans

Harnessing the power of the sun can dispel even the gloomiest economic outlook. That can lead to a bright career in clean energy for transitioning service members and Veterans, says Solar Ready Vets. The solar industry ranks as one of the fastest-growing sectors in the U.S. economy, due to federal policies, technological innovations, competitive installation costs, and increasing demand from the private and public sectors for clean electricity. This demand means the solar industry needs skilled workers in many areas, such as installation, production, manufacturing, sales and management. Military service provides skills in leadership, teamwork, ingenuity and persistence that can easily be applied to a career in the solar industry. *U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs*, Mar. 23, 2001:

<https://blogs.va.gov/VAntage/86224/bright-future-military-transitioning-servicemembers-veterans-solar-energy-industry/>

Solar Ready Vets Network

Veterans of the U.S. Armed Forces are outstanding candidates for careers in the solar industry. Military service provides the leadership abilities and technical skills that solar companies value highly. While some veterans begin with entry-level jobs and move up the ranks, others transition directly to advanced leadership roles within the rapidly growing solar workforce—*The Solar Foundation* website, 2021:

<https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/solar-ready-vets/>

Agrivoltaics

Largest “Agrivoltaic” Research Project Underway in Colorado

Today, Solar FlexRack, a division of Northern States Metals announced that it supplied its tracker solution for [Jack’s Solar Garden](#), a 1.2-MW community solar farm and the largest agrivoltaic research project in the U.S., located in Boulder County, Colorado. Jack’s sits on five acres of farmland for the dual use of agriculture and solar energy production. In partnership with the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL), Colorado State University, and the University of Arizona, this project will be studying how best to grow wildflowers, pasture and prairie grasses, pollinator habitats, as well as crops, such as carrots, onions, tomatoes and squash that will all be planted this season underneath and around the solar array—Jennifer Runyon, *Renewable Energy World*, Mar. 17, 2021: <https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/largest-agrivoltaic-research-project-underway-in-colorado/>

Power Food: Agrivoltaics Scores impressive Triple Win, but Some Food Safety Concerns Remain

A win-win is always welcome. But what about a win-win-win? Researchers say that is what is possible with agrivoltaics, a groundbreaking system that combines solar energy with agriculture. Some refer to it as “dual solar” or “solar sharing”. The win-win-win here is the ability of agrivoltaics to increase food production, boost renewable energy production and achieve important water savings — all on the same piece of land—Cookson Beecher, *Food Safety News*, Mar. 22, 2021:

<https://www.foodsafetynews.com/2021/03/agrivoltaics-scores-impressive-triple-win-but-some-food-safety-concerns-remain/>

Soft Costs of Solar

NREL Releases Online Tool to Expedite Solar Permitting

Distributed solar photovoltaic prices have plummeted over the past decade, but non-equipment soft costs such as permitting, inspection and interconnection (PII) remain high. PII review and approval processes associated with the 20,000 distinct jurisdictions and 3,000 utilities can sometimes add weeks or months to the installation process along with higher install costs passed to homeowners. In partnership with the solar industry, the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) has developed the [Solar Time-based Residential Analytics and Cycle time Estimator](#) (Solar TRACE), an online tool to increase transparency into PII processes, requirements and overall adoption cycle times nationwide—Michael Bates, *Solar Industry*, Mar. 10, 2021: <https://solarindustrymag.com/nrel-releases-online-tool-to-expedite-solar-permitting>

Solar Panel Recycling

Redwood Materials to Process Batteries and Solar Panels Recycled Through ERI

Electronics recycler [ERI](#) and [Redwood Materials](#) are partnering on both battery and solar panel recycling. Redwoods Materials, co-founded by former Tesla CTO JB Straubel, is dedicated to handling e-waste responsibly. “ERI and Redwood Materials working together signals a unique, unprecedented partnership that will tackle the ‘last mile’ of electronic recycling: solar panels and batteries,” said John Shegerian, ERI’s Co-Founder and Executive Chairman—Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, Mar. 25, 2021: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2021/03/redwood-materials-to-process-battery-and-solar-panels-recycled-through-eri/>

Upcoming Presentations and Webinars

Solar Washington Presentation: Solar Financing 101: Thursday, April 8, 2021 12:00 p.m.

Solar Financing 101. You are ready, your roof is ready, the sun is out and the tax holding you credit is waiting. So what is holding you back? If trying to figure out how to pay for it is a hurdle this presentation is for you. Learn more about your options when it comes to paying for your solar system including why no interest may not always be the best option. For more information and to register see: <https://www.solarwa.org/april-2021-solar-washington-presentation-solar-financing-101>

GoGreen Virtual Annual Conference: Tuesday, April 6, 2021

For more than a decade, the GoGreen Conference has been an action driving sustainability learning experience for community leaders, business and public sector decision-makers in the Pacific Northwest. Featuring regionally focused content and recognized leaders from our communities, GoGreen works across industry silos to foster peer-to-peer learning and collaborative solutions. For more information and to register see: <https://www.seattle.gogreenconference.net/>

Utility Scale Solar and Siting Considerations: Tuesday, April 27, 2021 3:00 p.m. PDT

This live, free, Zoom webinar, hosted by Penn State Extension, will focus on key siting issues associated with utility scale solar development. The presentation will include a virtual tour of several recently installed solar facilities in Pennsylvania and New York. Information will be presented on how stormwater is managed at a large solar facility, planning proper vegetative cover prior to construction,

selection of forage species for use in solar grazing, options for fencing in an agricultural area. Registration is required to receive the link to access the webinar. *Farm and Dairy*, Mar. 29, 2021. For more information and to register: <https://www.farmanddairy.com/news/webinar-set-to-look-at-issues-with-utility-scale-solar-projects/656581.html>

Want to Contribute? If you have information on events, publications or other solar topics that you would like mentioned in an upcoming issue of Solar Newsbriefs, please contact Anne Whitney at whitneya@energy.wsu.edu

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