



April 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 Energy Facility Siting Council Proposes Rulemaking to Clarify Contested Case Procedures for Energy Projects

The Oregon Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC or the Council), which oversees the siting of large-scale energy facilities including wind and solar power projects, voted late last month to initiate rulemaking to clarify aspects of its contested case procedures. A contested case hearing is a culminating step in the EFSC site certification process, a public, contested case hearing administered by a hearings officer—Stoel Rives, *JD Supra*, Mar 6, 2024: <https://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/oregon-energy-facility-siting-council-7215386/>

How to Avoid Solar Scams that Overpromise, Underdeliver

Oregon has a thriving solar industry. High customer interest, driven in part by financial incentives and increased tax credits, has helped sustain local solar installers and even attract new businesses. Unfortunately, the strong market has also attracted a growing number of [solar sales companies focused on sales, rather than customer needs](#). These companies may operate in multiple states, expanding to places like Oregon where there is strong demand and incentive offers work to their advantage—Energy Trust of Oregon, Blog, Mar 7, 2024: <https://blog.energytrust.org/how-to-avoid-solar-scams-that-overpromise-underdeliver/>

Wins for Water: Merkley and Wyden Announce Boost in Water Conservation, Small Ports, and Renewable Energy in 2024 Funding Package

Oregon's U.S. Senators Jeff Merkley and Ron Wyden today announced major investments to enhance water infrastructure and conservation and supercharge renewable energy projects in Oregon—including over \$12.5 million in funding for 8 critical community-initiated projects across the state—have passed through the fiscal year 2024 (FY24) minibus funding package. This six-bill package cleared both chambers of Congress last week and was quickly signed into law by President Biden—Ron Wyden, U.S. Senator for Oregon, [Press Release], Mar 13, 2024: <https://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wins-for-water-merkley-and-wyden-announce-boost-in-water-conservation-small-ports-and-renewable-energy-in-2024-funding-package>

Avangrid Foundation Awards \$140,000 to Wildlife Rehabilitation Centers

The Avangrid Foundation, the primary philanthropic arm of leading sustainable energy company Avangrid, Inc. (NYSE: AGR), has announced a record total of \$140,000 in grants to 15 wildlife rehabilitation centers as part of its Wildlife Rehabilitation Program.... Oregon recipients:

- [Blue Mountain Wildlife](#) (Oregon): Complete the fourth building in the organization's standalone Intake Center, which includes exam and quarantine rooms, to combat Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI).
- [Rowena Wildlife Clinic](#) (Oregon): Purchase raptor food to ensure wildlife is well-fed while rehabilitating.

Clean Technica, Mar 14, 2024: <https://cleantechnica.com/2024/03/14/avangrid-foundation-awards-140000-to-wildlife-rehabilitation-centers/>

Oregon Solar Incentives, Tax Credits and Rebates of 2024

Oregon is a rising star when it comes to solar energy. The state offers strong solar incentives and favorable net metering laws. Despite its reputation for rain, Oregon gets plenty of sunshine for solar power. This article explores the incentives for going solar in Oregon in 2024— Geraldine Orentas, *Forbes*, Mar 15, 2024: <https://www.forbes.com/home-improvement/solar/oregon-solar-incentives/>

Oregon makes it Easier to Connect Distributed Solar and Storage

Solar and storage connected to Oregon's distribution grid will be required to use smart inverters that meet the global standard for inverters known as IEEE 1547-2018, starting this June. The requirement will enable Oregon's grid to "accommodate more renewable energy with fewer costly upgrades," said Radina Valova, regulatory vice president for the Interstate Renewable Energy Council—William Driscoll, *pV magazine*, Mar 18, 2024: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/03/18/oregon-makes-it-easier-to-connect-distributed-solar-and-storage/>

Oregon Department of Energy Announces \$18 Million in Grant Funding for Renewable Energy and Energy Resilience Projects

The Oregon Department of Energy is pleased to announce it will soon begin accepting applications for a third round of funding through the agency's [Community Renewable Energy Grant Program](#). ODOE is making \$18 million available to support planning and construction of renewable energy or energy resilience projects for Tribes, public bodies, and consumer-owned utilities—Oregon Dept. of Energy, [Press Release], Mar 25, 2024: <https://energyinfo.oregon.gov/blog/2024/3/13/oregon-department-of-energy-announces-18-million-in-grant-funding-for-renewable-energy-and-energy-resilience-projects>

Washington News

El Sol al Alcance de tus Manos: South Everett Solar Project

The PUD is partnering with the City of Everett on a solar project that is planned to be built in south Everett and will generate funds to assist the PUD's Project PRIDE program, which assists income-qualified PUD customers. The planned solar array will have a capacity of 400 kilowatts, generating enough electricity to power approximately 30 homes in a year... Construction of the project is scheduled to begin March 2024—Snohomish County PUD, [Feb 23, 2023]: <https://www.snopud.com/save-energy/solar/community-solar/south-everett-solar-project/>

Yakima Nation Wins Up to \$32M Federal Award for Solar Power Project

A Yakama Nation clean energy project has been selected to receive up to \$32 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell (D-WA) announced today. The Yakama Tribal Solar Canal & Hydro Project will lower electricity costs and conserve more water by converting inefficient, open-water irrigation canals that are part of the Wapato Irrigation Project into a solar and micro-hydropower irrigation system—Maria Cantwell, Press Release, Feb 27, 2024: <https://www.cantwell.senate.gov/news/press-releases/yakama-nation-wins-up-to-32m-federal-award-for-solar-power-project>

PSE Tests Back-Up Battery, Solar Microgrid on Samish Island

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is partnering with the Samish Island Community to test out a new microgrid comprised of a 50kW/336kWh battery and an 8kW solar array. PSE will be testing the system's ability to form a microgrid and provide back-up power during a power outage. The battery is installed on the grounds of the Samish Island Fire Station, along with the solar array. The battery is housed in a weatherproof enclosure, atop a concrete foundation. PSE will primarily be testing the ability of the battery and solar array to form a microgrid and provide back-up power during an outage. This is known as islanding. PSE will also evaluate other functions like peak shaving, which eases strain on the grid during times of high demand, and frequency response, which contributes to grid stability—Puget Sound Energy, [Press Release], Feb 28, 2024: <https://www.pse.com/en/press-release/details/Puget-Sound-Energy-tests-new-battery-with-Samish-Island-Community>

Washington State Awards \$8.1 Million in Grants for Microgrids and Other Renewable Energy Projects

The Washington State Department of Commerce announced it had awarded a total of \$8.1 million in grant funds to 14 renewable energy projects in the state last week... Multiple microgrid projects were among the recipients... The funds were available to tribes, retail electric utilities, local governments and community organizations and were awarded through the department's Clean Energy Fund (CEF), which aims to expand the amount of renewable energy in Washington state's electrical grid—Kathy Hitchens, *Microgrid Knowledge*, Mar 6, 2024: <https://www.microgridknowledge.com/microgrid-financing/article/33038270/washington-state-awards-81-million-in-grants-for-microgrids-and-other-renewable-energy-projects>

Seattle Solar Company Seeks to Sidestep Eastern Washington County

A Seattle company applied to a Washington state council to build a 60-megawatt solar installation in Benton County, seeking to sidestep the county's opposition to energy projects on farmland. OneEnergy Renewables proposes to put the Wallula Gap solar project on about 400 acres leased from Farmland Reserve Inc. 4 miles north of the unincorporated community of Plymouth—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Mar 7, 2024. [Click here to read more.](#)

Solar Project Gets Warning on Soil, Pushes Back

The company behind the Carriger solar project projected for the Goldendale area learned of a dire warning last month from the Washington State Department of Agriculture (Agriculture) and quickly rejected the agency's assertions... Kelly McLain, policy advisor for Agriculture, warned the Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Committee (EFSEC) in an email last August and reiterated last month that there was serious danger to soil conditions from the Carriger project. Agriculture warned,

“This land is being removed from agricultural production. It is unlikely that the ground will produce yields after the project is decommissioned that equal the production values right now” —Lou Marzeles, *The Goldendale Sentinel*, Mar 17, 2024: https://www.goldendalesentinel.com/news/solar-project-gets-warning-on-soil-pushes-back/article_2b126834-d0d8-11ee-95fc-335d3c71aab3.html

UTC Approves PSE Request to Extend Net Metering

On December 20, 2023, Puget Sound Energy (PSE) submitted a formal request to the Washington Utility and Trade Commission (UTC) for approval to continue offering full retail rate net metering “to Customers that have applied for interconnection of a new or modified Net Metering System until December 31, 2025, or when a replacement Net Metering schedule is in place for new Net Metered Customers, whichever is later” —Alana Nelson, WASEIA, Mar 19, 2024: <https://waseia.org/utc-approves-pse-request-to-extend-net-metering/>

PUD Breaks Ground on Next Community Solar Project

Snohomish County PUD was joined Friday, March 22 by partners from the City of Everett, Connect to Casino Road, the Department of Commerce, and others, to officially break ground on its newest community solar project, “El Sol al Alcance de tus Manos” or “the sun at your fingertips.” Construction will begin this month on the project that will be built in south Everett and generate funds that will assist PUD customers having trouble paying their bill—*My Everett News*, Mar 25, 2024: https://myeverettnews.com/2024/03/25/pud-breaks-ground-on-next-community-solar-project/?utm_medium=email

Seattle Company Proposes New Solar Farm Near Tri-Cities

A Seattle company is proposing a solar farm south of the Tri-Cities that could generate power each year for about 13,000 homes. Wallula Gap Solar is the fourth solar project in Benton County now seeking a permit to build through the Washington state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, or EFSEC. Wallula Gap Solar would be a 60-megawatt solar farm, possibly with 240 megawatts of battery storage, on nearly 440 acres just north of the Columbia River. The site is about 25 miles south of Tri-Cities, off Highway 14 about five miles west of Interstate 82, northwest of Plymouth and east of Paterson—Annette Cary, *Tri-City Herald* republished in *The Columbian*, Mar 29, 2024: <https://www.columbian.com/news/2024/mar/29/seattle-company-proposes-new-solar-farm-near-tri-cities/>

County Commissioners Meeting has Flash Point Over Solar Project

Members from the Washington State Department of Commerce appeared at the public comment section at the Klickitat County Commissioners weekly meeting on March 19. One was Larry Matson, who described himself as a “renewable energy grants section supervisor,” from the Yakima office of the Department of Commerce. He explained the agency had established a new clean energy siting and permitting grant program with a biennial budget of \$10 million... The purpose, he said, was to make local governments aware that this new grant funding source could be used for supporting pre-development work, planning, and environmental impact statements for sites intended for clean energy production—Rodger Nichols, *The Goldendale Sentinel*, Mar 29, 2024: https://www.goldendalesentinel.com/news/county-commissioners-meeting-has-flash-point-over-solar-project/article_4c6fe656-ec52-11ee-836c-dffca4cf5e3b.html

Funding for Comprehensive Value of Solar and Storage Approved

Following a tumultuous series of legislative events, lawmakers in Washington approved a supplementary 2025 budget which allocated funds for a comprehensive study on the Value of Solar and Storage. This victory holds great significance for advocates of widespread adoption of rooftop solar energy in Washington. The findings of this study will play a crucial role in shaping upcoming discussions and choices regarding key matters like net metering rates—Alana Nelson, WASEIA, Mar 29, 2024: <https://waseia.org/funding-for-comprehensive-value-of-solar-and-storage-approved/>

Solar Consumer Protection Bill Passed

In a commendable display of bipartisan unity, the Washington state legislature recently passed the Solar Consumer Protection Act, known as SHB2156. Notably, both the House and Senate votes for this act were unanimous, highlighting the broad support it received... The bill was signed into law on March 28, 2024, by Governor Jay Inslee, and will take effect on June 7, 2024—Alana Nelson, WASEIA, Mar 29, 2024: <https://waseia.org/solar-consumer-protection-bill-passed/>

Grant Applications Now Open for Clean Energy Projects that Benefit Overburdened Communities and Vulnerable Populations

Commerce is now accepting applications to support the planning, design, and construction of clean energy projects that will improve health, resiliency, and economic outcomes for communities that face inequitable risk from energy burden, pollution, and other environmental factors. For this round of grant funding, applicants will be required to demonstrate that projects benefit overburdened communities and vulnerable populations by improving environmental health conditions, reducing energy inequities, or strengthening community resiliency. Applications due Apr 8, 2024—[Click here for more information.](#)

National News

Final IRS Rules Released on IRA Direct Pay and Transferability

The Dept. of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released [final rules](#) on key provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) to expand the reach of the clean energy tax credits... The IRA created [two new credit delivery mechanisms](#) — elective pay (otherwise known as “direct pay”) and transferability — that will help enable state, local, and Tribal governments; non-profit organizations; Puerto Rico and other U.S. territories; and other entities to take advantage of clean energy tax credits— Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, Mar 5, 2024: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/03/final-irs-rules-released-on-ira-direct-pay-and-transferability/>

Rural Communities Mobilize to Unlock Benefits of Federal Clean Energy Investments

The federal government is placing big bets on the leadership role rural communities will play in building resilient clean energy futures, which should be a call to action for the clean energy and corporate sustainability communities. This was clearly illustrated Feb. 27, when the [U.S. Department of Energy \(DOE\) announced more than \\$366 million in funding](#) for 17 projects across 20 states and 30 tribal nations and communities to accelerate clean energy deployment in rural and remote areas across the country... Collectively, we are seeing the largest investment in rural power in 100 years, and it will transform the energy landscape and affect the U.S. industrial sector in ways we haven't seen since the

Rural Electrification Act passed in 1936—Michelle Moore, *GreenBiz*, Mar 7, 2024:

<https://www.greenbiz.com/article/rural-communities-mobilize-unlock-benefits-federal-clean-energy-investments>

Americans Want Residential Solar, but Trust and Costs are Still Big Concerns: Report

Americans are interested in residential solar, but many get stuck in the planning stage, get caught up on costs, or struggle to find a “trustworthy” solar company, according to a new report.

Aurora Solar, a platform for solar sales and design, announced its second annual “Solar Industry Snapshot,” which examines early 2024 U.S. residential solar trends through three data sources: Aurora’s solar projects database of more than nine million projects over the past two years; a survey of 1,000 U.S. homeowners about their solar adoption behaviors and motivations; and, a survey of 500 U.S. solar professionals on the state of the industry—Sean Wolfe, *Renewable Energy World*, Mar 27, 2024:

Read more and access the report here: https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/storage/americans-want-residential-solar-but-trust-and-costs-are-still-big-concerns-report/?utm_source=rew_weekly_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2024-03-26

Agrivoltaics News

Solar Power Occupies a Lot of Space – Here’s How to Make it More Ecologically Beneficial to the Land it Sits On

As societies look for ways to cut greenhouse gas emissions and slow climate change, large-scale solar power is playing a central role. Climate scientists view it as the tool with [the greatest potential to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 2030](#). In the U.S., the Department of Energy predicts that solar will [account for nearly 60%](#) of all new utility-scale electricity-generating capacity installed in 2024—Matthew Sturchio, *The Conversation*, Mar 12, 2024: <https://theconversation.com/solar-power-occupies-a-lot-of-space-heres-how-to-make-it-more-ecologically-beneficial-to-the-land-it-sits-on-216423>

Community Solar

Technical Potential and Meaningful Benefits of Community Solar in the United States

Community solar is any solar project or purchasing program within a geographic area in which the benefits flow to multiple customers, such as individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and other groups. Community solar customers typically subscribe to or own a portion of the energy generated by a solar array and receive an electric bill credit for electricity generated by their share of the community solar system... The goal of this study was to identify the maximum amount of community solar capacity that is physically feasible for development and the extent of the associated benefits—Katy Waechter, Eric O’Shaughnessy, Sudha Kannan, and Robin Burton, NREL, Feb 2024:

<https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy24osti/87524.pdf>

New Policy Proposal Dims Hopes of Reviving Community Solar in California

A three-year effort to revamp California’s moribund community-solar market, spurred by state law and backed by solar industry groups, consumer advocates, environmental-justice organizations, labor unions

and the state's homebuilding industry, may now be in jeopardy—Jeff St. John, *Canary Media*, Mar 6, 2024: <https://www.canarymedia.com/articles/solar/new-policy-proposal-dims-hopes-of-reviving-community-solar-in-california>

Community Solar Projects Bring Renewable Energy to the Masses

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) explains that community solar, also known as shared solar or solar gardens, is a distributed solar energy deployment model that allows customers to buy or lease part of a larger, off-site shared solar photovoltaic (PV) system. It says community solar arrangements allow customers to enjoy advantages of solar energy without having to install their own solar energy system... The Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA) reports 6.5 GW of community solar capacity has been installed in the U.S. through the 1st quarter of 2024. Furthermore, SEIA predicts more than 6 GW of community solar capacity will be added over the next five years. It says 41 states, plus the District of Columbia, have at least one community solar project online—Aaron Larson, *Power*, Mar 7, 2024: <https://www.powermag.com/community-solar-projects-bring-renewable-energy-to-the-masses/>

Community Solar: A Powerful Tool for Expanding Low-Income Access to Solar Benefits

Berlyn Hubler, community solar program manager at nonprofit [Energy Outreach Colorado](#), has seen the impact of community solar on low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities firsthand... “We often hear that subscribers are excited to pay their bill because it’s affordable,” she said. “These households no longer need to make tough decisions related to their energy use. They can turn on their air conditioning and not worry about affording food or medicine next month”—Sara Carbone, *Solar Power World*, Mar 18, 2024: https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/03/community-solar-a-powerful-tool-for-expanding-low-income-access-to-solar-benefits/?mc_cid=55eaec6891&mc_eid=f6a5058b4f

Factory and Warehouse Rooftops Offer Untapped Opportunity to Help Disadvantaged Communities Bridge Solar Energy Divide

Lower-income communities across the United States have long been much slower to adopt solar power than their affluent neighbors, even when local and federal agencies offer tax breaks and other financial incentives... But, commercial and industrial rooftops, such as those atop retail buildings and factories, offer a big opportunity to reduce what researchers call the "solar equity gap," according to [a new study \[titled Exploring the potential of non-residential solar to tackle energy injustice\]](#), published in *Nature Energy* and led by researchers at Stanford University—Techxplore, Mar 28, 2024: [Click here to read more and access study.](#)

Utilities Must Come Clean About the Full Value of Community Solar

Utilities often oppose customer-driven, third-party-owned energy projects like community solar because they threaten to supplant utility investments and utility shareholder profits—Jeff Cramer, *Utility Dive*, Mar 28, 2024: <https://www.utilitydive.com/news/utilities-community-solar-clean-energy/710558/>

Upcoming Conferences, Events and Webinars

Building Equitable Practices & Programs: A Conversation with Energy Equity Leaders : Webinar Apr 5

This CESA webinar will feature a fireside chat with energy equity experts to discuss best practices for states to responsibly engage with communities as they develop and implement clean energy programs [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

**IRA, BIL, and the Future of Energy: A Summit to Support State Implementation : Apr 17-18
Washington, DC**

The Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) and Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) are creating unprecedented opportunities for states to rapidly advance clean energy and bring its benefits to the residents of their state. But the federal funding opportunities resulting from these laws can be complicated and difficult to implement. The Summit will provide state and federal officials with practical information related to IRA/BIL funding programs and the challenges that are confronting states. It will be discussion-heavy so that attendees can learn from each other about their plans, programs, and lessons learned—Clean Energy States Alliance: [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Microgrid Knowledge Conference : Baltimore, MD : Apr 22-24

Microgrid Knowledge (MGK) Conference 2024 is the intersection of education, advocacy and collaboration on the mission-critical pathway to NetZero unity. Register before March 17 to take advantage of Early Bird Pricing: [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Prioritizing Equity in Program Development: How to Build a Technical Assistance Fund for Resilient Power Technical Assistance Fund : Webinar

This webinar discusses how resilient solar+storage systems can enable community-serving organizations to provide essential services during power outages, and these systems can provide year-round cost savings. This webinar will also feature a presentation by staff at the Washington State Department of Commerce on their Solar Plus Storage for Resilient Communities program (<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/growing-the-economy/energy/solar-plus-storage/>). This program awards planning and construction grants, and offers direct technical assistance to eligible communities. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Clean Energy Connector: How States Can Provide Community Solar to Low-Income Communities

- DOE Webinar, Apr 10, 2024 9:00 AM

[Register here](#)

NW Energy Coalition Clean & Affordable Energy Conference : Boise, 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](#).

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](#).

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 anne.whitney@energy.wsu.edu. While every URL in Solar Newsbriefs is checked for accuracy prior to distribution, URLs may change, and servers may temporarily fail to connect to working URLs.

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