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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

UGE Achieves Notice to Proceed Milestone for 3.5-Megawatt Community Solar Project in Oregon

UGE International Ltd. (TSXV: UGE) (OTCQB: UGEIF) (the "Company" or "UGE"), a leader in commercial and community solar, announces that it has reached the 'Notice to Proceed' (NTP) milestone for its 3.5-megawatt community solar project in Polk County, Oregon. The Notice to Proceed milestone indicates that financing for the project has closed, and all necessary permits and interconnection approvals for the project are in place... At 3.5-megawatts, the project will produce enough electricity to power more than 800 homes each year—UGE, [Press Release], October 10, 2023: <https://ugei.com/uge-achieves-notice-to-proceed-milestone-for-3-5-megawatt-community-solar-project-in-oregon/>

Spotlight: Oregon's Energy Facility Siting Process

Reviewing and potentially siting energy facilities – such as solar, wind, or transmission facilities – in Oregon is a complex and sometimes lengthy process. Proposed energy facilities go through a robust public process to ensure they are up to Oregon's standards before they can be built... Before a state-jurisdiction energy facility is built in Oregon, a developer must apply for a site certificate from the state's [Energy Facility Siting Council](#). The council has seven members who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Oregon Senate—For more information on Oregon's energy facility siting process, resources, and schedule for upcoming Council meetings see: Oregon Department of Energy, October 12, 2023: <https://energyinfo.oregon.gov/blog/2023/10/12/spotlight-oregons-energy-facility-siting-process>

Habitat's 27th Street Townhomes in Bend Going Solar Thanks to Grant

New homes built in northeast Bend by Bend-Redmond Habitat for Humanity are getting a solar power boost thanks to a \$60,000 grant from All Points North Foundation... Habitat says the 27th Street Townhomes will provide sustainable, affordable homeownership to twelve local families... The nonprofit says low- and moderate-income households are disproportionately affected by energy insecurity—Central Oregon Daily News Sources, *Central Oregon Daily News*, October 17, 2023: <https://centraloregondaily.com/bend-habitat-townhomes-solar-all-points-north/>

Biden Unveils \$3.5B Investment on Nationwide Electric Grids, Including Project in Oregon

Biden administration on Wednesday announced \$3.5 billion for 58 projects across the country to strengthen electric grid resilience as extreme weather events such as the deadly Maui and California wildfires continue to strain the nation's aging transmission systems. Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Reservation in North-Central Oregon will receive \$250M from the federal government—Matthew Daly (Associated Press), OPB, October, 19, 2023:

<https://www.opb.org/article/2023/10/18/biden-announces-3-5b-for-projects-nationwide-to-strengthen-electric-grid-bolster-resilience/>

Oregon Utilities, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Get \$450 Million to Improve Electric Grid

Two Oregon utilities and the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs will receive nearly \$450 million from the federal government to modernize the region's power grid and incorporate a growing amount of renewable energy... The investment by the Biden administration will allow PacifiCorp, Portland General Electric, or PGE, and the tribe to boost transmission capacity and job training programs and fortify the electric grid from the growing threat of wildfires—Alex Baumhardt, *Oregon Capital Chronicle*, October 20, 2023:

<https://oregoncapitalchronicle.com/2023/10/20/oregon-utilities-confederated-tribes-of-warm-springs-get-450-million-to-improve-electric-grid/>

Wyden, Colleagues Introduce Legislation to Help Homeowners Install New Renewable Energy Systems

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden said today he has introduced legislation that would help state, local and Tribal governments accelerate the permitting and inspection process for residents to install home energy systems, like rooftop solar panels... “Each year, more Americans are installing solar panels and other clean energy products into their homes but local governments are struggling to streamline the permitting and inspection process for qualifying clean home energy systems,” said Wyden. “That’s why I’m proud to cosponsor the SHINE Act which would simplify the permitting process for homeowners and local governments and build on the clean energy tax credits I authored in the Inflation Reduction Act—Ron Wyden, United States Senator for Oregon, News [Press Release], October 23, 2023:

<https://www.wyden.senate.gov/news/press-releases/wyden-colleagues-introduce-legislation-to-help-homeowners-install-new-renewable-energy-systems>

Updated Oregon Solar Dashboard Shows Decades of Solar Growth

Over the past few decades, solar-generated electricity in Oregon has blossomed from a few scattered rooftop projects in the 1980s to dozens of large utility-scale solar facilities today. The Oregon Department of Energy's interactive [Solar Dashboard](#) has been updated to show Oregon's solar growth from 1986 to 2022—Oregon Department of Energy, [Blog], October 25, 2023. [Click here to read more.](#)

Washington News

A Closer Look at Proposed Horse Heaven Hills Windfarm Project

The battle continues over the development of what would be the largest wind farm project in the state of Washington... The project first came to public light in late 2021, but according to the group Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S, preliminary work began as far back as 2017. Tri-Cities Cares is a non-profit group of area residents who are pushing back against the rapid speed with which the project is being pushed along... Tri-Cities CARES also says there is a solar panel and battery-energy storage portion of the plan that

many people are not aware of. The solar panel portion could see dozens of acres covered in solar panels, and large battery-energy storage sites are also planned—John McKay, KFLD NewsTalk, September 26, 2023: https://newstalk870.com/a-closer-look-at-proposed-horse-heaven-hills-windfarm-project/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral

Yakama Tribe Seeks to Talk to Biologists about Wind Project

The Yakama Nation on Monday asked the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council to overrule its chairwoman and let the tribe ask state biologists how the Horse Heaven wind and solar project would impact wildlife... A motion filed by the tribe seeks to reopen hearings on the proposed energy project in southeast Washington so that the council can hear directly from Fish and Wildlife biologists James Watson and Jason Fiddora—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, September 27, 2023:

https://www.capitalpress.com/climate_changed/yakama-tribe-seeks-to-talk-to-biologists-about-wind-project/article_a48581d0-5caa-11ee-8766-4be4964f81d3.html

Lighthouse Mission Getting Nearly \$1 Million for New Facility

The Lighthouse Mission has received a nearly \$1 million grant to support its new homeless shelter. The Washington State Department of Commerce awarded \$970,000 to Lighthouse for the installation of solar and battery back-up power systems on Wednesday. The systems will help maintain services during power outages and saves energy costs for the Mission. 213 solar panels will be added to their new five story building, which will replace the current Base Camp on Cornwall Ave—Adam Smith, KGMI, September 29, 2023: <https://kgmi.com/news/007700-lighthouse-mission-getting-nearly-1-million-for-new-facility/>

Solar Tour Expands Locations in P[ort] A[ngeles], Sequim

Two local homeowners open their doors for the National Solar Tour on Saturday, Oct. 7... Dave Large, a retired engineer at 173 Griffith Farm Road in Sequim, offers tours from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. for the sixth year with the American Solar Energy Society. His “net-zero passive home” was built in 2016 and generates more energy than it uses... He’s joined by retired park ranger Janis Burger, at 1328 Bent Cedars Way in Port Angeles, who opens her home’s doors from 10 a.m.-4 p.m.—Matthew Nash, *Sequim Gazette*, October 4, 2023: <https://www.sequimgazette.com/news/solar-tour-expands-locations-in-pa-sequim/>

Port Nabs \$283K in Solar Power Grants: Funds will Help Provide Renewable Power at HQ, Grove Field

The Washington State Department of Commerce has awarded \$283,000 to the Port of Camas-Washougal for the installation of solar and battery backup equipment at two Port facilities... The Port will receive two solar power grants from — \$103,000 for its administrative building and \$180,000 for its Grove Field airport—Doug Flanagan, *Camas-Washougal Post-Record*, October 5, 2023: https://www.camapostrecord.com/news/2023/oct/05/port-nabs-283k-in-solar-power-grants/?utm_medium=email

Solar Panels Stolen from Gray Road Fire Victim’s Home

The Knapp family lost their lakefront "dream home" in the Gray Road Fire. Monday, when the family visited the property to assess the damages, they discovered two solar panels were stolen... Solar panel thefts are not uncommon. In fact, it is a growing crime all over the world... According to the National

Association of Certified Home Inspectors, thieves are stealing solar panels and sometimes re-selling them on the black market due to how expensive they are and how easy it can be to remove the panels from a home—Steffi Roche, Non Stop Local KHQ, October 10, 2023: https://www.khq.com/news/solar-panels-stolen-from-gray-road-fire-victims-home/article_71a82080-67cf-11ee-8897-73cdd03425b9.html

Ag-tech Startup Aigen, which Sells Solar-Powered Weed-Thumping Robots, Lands \$12M

Aigen raised \$12 million in fresh cash, providing a boost for the company rolling out a solar-powered robot that uses advanced computer vision models to spot and kill weeds... Founded in 2020, the Kirkland, Wash.-based startup recently unveiled the Aigen Element, which features two robotic arms that thump out unwanted plants on farms. Its robots can operate continuously for up to 14 hours and do not need to be plugged in—Nate Bek, *GeekWire*, October 13, 2023:

<https://www.geekwire.com/2023/aigen-a-seattle-startup-that-sells-a-solar-powered-weed-thumping-robot-lands-12m/>

Puget Sound Energy, The Alliance Center Announce New Solar Array

The newest solar array in town is helping ensure the continued excellence of The Alliance Center, funded through Puget Sound Energy's Green Power and Solar Choice programs... The Alliance Center is a group of organizations dedicated toward advocating for establishing a stable, adequate and dedicated funding for community health and human services. Puget Sound Energy awarded The Alliance Center with a \$96,375 Green Power Solar Grant earlier this year. The Alliance Center has since installed a 30.38-kilowatt project, which can generate nearly 31,000 kWh annually—Puget Sound Energy, [Press Release], October 19, 2023: <https://www.pse.com/en/press-release/details/PSE-The-Alliance-Center-announce-new-solar-array>

Yakima Commissioner Says State Must do Better Siting Energy Farms in WA

It's no secret that Yakima County Commissioner Amanda McKinney is against large solar/energy farms locating in agricultural areas in central Washington. McKinney has appeared on KIT many times talking about her concerns and need for more work before the farms are approved. She's concerned about the loss of productive ag land in the valley—Lance Tormey, NewsTalk KIT, October 17, 2023:

https://newstalkkit.com/yakima-commissioner-says-state-must-do-better-siting-energy-farms-in-wa/?utm_source=tsmclip&utm_medium=referral

Horse Heaven Wind and Solar Project Seen as Threat to Tribal Properties

The Horse Heaven wind and solar project would unavoidably cause significant harm to views, recreation and tribal cultural properties in southeast Washington, an Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council planner said Oct. 18... Scout Clean Energy has said it would trim back the project, which would be visible from the Tri-Cities, but the changes wouldn't be enough to prevent the impacts, EFSEC environmental planner Sean Greene said—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, October 19, 2023: [Click here to read more.](#)

State Project to Install Solar Panels at 32 Agricultural Workers' Homes in the Lower Yakima Valley

The Washington State Department of Commerce has launched a \$970,000 pilot project to provide free solar panels to agricultural workers residing in the Lower Yakima Valley... [Commerce Director Mike] Fong said the project will support 32 homes in receiving solar panels, which they anticipate will cut residents' power bills by 70% to 100% by the end of November—Emily Goodell, *Apple Valley News Now*,

October 17, 2023: https://www.applevalleynewsnow.com/news/state-project-to-install-solar-panels-at-32-agricultural-workers-homes-in-the-lower-yakima/article_fcf47f1a-6d4e-11ee-bac3-db81693a065c.html

They're Setting Out to Build the Best Car Under the Sun.

The Green Energy Team at Raisbeck Aviation High in Tukwila is the number-one high school group in the country for designing and racing vehicles that are solely solar. "All the power comes from the sun," said club president Hagen Rankin. "300, 400 miles on a single charge." The team first entered the prestigious Solar Car Challenge in 2019—Jim Dever, KING 5 Evening, October 27, 2023:

<https://www.krem.com/article/entertainment/television/programs/raisbeck-aviation-high-school-solar-car-team-challenge/281-825086c9-fb27-4bda-8741-ac35c0bfbcba>

Washington Ag Director Bows out of Horse Heaven Decision

Washington state agriculture director Derek Sandison has excused himself from a council considering whether to allow the Horse Heaven wind and solar project to be built on farmland in Benton County... Scout Clean Energy's application to install more than 200 wind turbines and 6,000 acres of solar panels has raised questions about how much Eastern Washington farmland will be lost to renewable energy projects—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, October 26, 2023:

https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/washington-ag-director-bows-out-of-horse-heaven-decision/article_c2d40028-7350-11ee-a9c5-9fb406e4422c.html

Installing Solar Panels, Electric Vehicle Charging Stations in Spokane May Soon be More Costly

The Spokane City Council is considering reinstating permitting fees for installing solar panels and electric vehicle charging stations as the city looks for various ways to increase revenue amid a budget crunch... Mayor Nadine Woodward has pointed to reinstating the fees that were waived in 2018 as a small part of a larger push to offset an estimated \$20 million shortfall in the city budget going into 2024—Emry Dinman, *Spokesman-Review*, October 30, 2023:

https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2023/oct/30/installing-solar-panels-electric-vehicle-charging-/?utm_medium=email

Seattle Startup Omnidian, which Helps Maintain Solar Panels, Raises \$25M

Omnidian, a Seattle company that manages solar power performance and services the panels for commercial and residential installations, announced \$25 million in new investment... Omnidian's software remotely detects performance issues for solar installations. The company has customers in 34 states—Lisa Stiffler, *GeekWire*, October 26, 2023: <https://www.geekwire.com/2023/seattle-startup-omnidian-which-helps-maintain-solar-panels-raises-25m/>

National News

Energy Firms, Green Groups and Others Reach Deal on Solar Farms

Solar developers, environmentalists, farming groups and tribal organizations said on Thursday that they had reached an agreement that could make it easier in the United States to build large solar farms, which have attracted stiff opposition in some places... The agreement seeks to address some thorny

land-use and biodiversity issues that often stymie power projects in which developers propose installing large arrays of solar panels. The deal is the result of months of discussions organized by the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, the Solar Energy Industries Association and the Nature Conservancy—Ivan Penn, republished from the NYT in *Press Reader/San Diego Union-Tribune*, October 15, 2023: <https://kleanindustries.com/resources/environmental-industry-market-analysis-research/energy-firms-green-groups-and-others-reach-deal-on-solar-farms/>

Biden Admin Releases \$3.5 Billion for Power Grid Resilience

Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm announced \$3.46 billion for 58 projects across 44 states to strengthen electric grid resilience and reliability... The funding, which is part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, will help bring more than 35 gigawatts of new renewable energy online, invest in 400 microgrids, and maintain and create union jobs with three out of four projects partnering with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), according to a DOE press conference—Jeff Postelwait, *T&D World*, October 18, 2023: <https://www.tdworld.com/overhead-transmission/article/21275749/biden-admin-releases-35-billion-for-power-grid-resilience>

Biden-Harris Administration Opens Low-Income Communities Bonus Credit Program for Clean Energy Projects Benefitting Underserved Communities

As part of President Biden’s Investing in America agenda, a key pillar of Bidenomics, the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), U.S. Department of the Treasury, and Internal Revenue Service (IRS) today announced the opening of applications for the [Low-Income Communities Bonus Credit Program](#). This program, supported by the Inflation Reduction Act, addresses the need to expand access to cost-saving clean energy projects in underserved communities through a groundbreaking tax incentive for solar and wind projects across the country. For more information and application instructions see: DOE Newsroom, October 19, 2023: <https://www.energy.gov/articles/biden-harris-administration-opens-low-income-communities-bonus-credit-program-clean-energy>

Industry

AI Tool Launches to Measure Community Sentiment Toward Solar

Recognizing the hurdle that community opposition presents to the solar industry, a permitting software provider has launched an AI tool to measure and evaluate community sentiment toward projects. Transect, a software provider that aims to streamline project siting and environmental permitting, announced the beta launch of the tool, Solar Pulse—John Engel, *Renewable Energy World*, Oct 4, 2023: https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/ai-tool-launches-to-measure-community-sentiment-toward-solar/?utm_source=rew_weekly_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2023-10-06

State Rooftop Solar Crackdowns Cloud the Industry’s Future

One of solar power’s biggest incentives is under attack in the states... For years, residents of most states who installed rooftop solar could count on hefty credits for any excess electricity they produced — a policy known as net metering — along with an array of government incentives. Now, several states are rolling back those payments at a time when the Biden administration is counting on solar to help meet its goal of a carbon-free grid by 2035—Jason Plautz, *E&E News*, October 24, 2023: <https://www.eenews.net/articles/state-rooftop-solar-crackdowns-cloud-the-industrys-future/>

Three Unions Organize for Utility-Scale Solar Projects

The IBEW, the LIUNA, and the IUOE have established guidelines to allocate tasks for utility-scale solar facilities, streamlining the process for developers to solicit construction bids—John Fitzgerald Weaver, *pv magazine*, October 24, 2023: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/10/24/three-unions-organize-for-utility-scale-solar-projects/>

Recycling

These Two Myths about Solar Power Are Slowing the Energy Transition

The transition from fossil fuels to renewable energy is essential in reducing emissions of the greenhouse gases that are causing rapid climate change. But in many cases, misinformation and misunderstandings about solar power and wind energy have delayed their adoption... Now, experts from Colorado have busted two of the most widespread myths about solar panels on social media and in the mass media. Writing in the journal *Nature Physics*, researchers at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) in Colorado have pushed back on claims that solar uptake will lead to a "waste mountain" of discarded panels, and further show that the purported toxicity of solar panels has been greatly exaggerated by media and even by government departments—David Vetter, *Forbes*, October 12, 2023: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidvetter/2023/10/12/these-two-myths-about-solar-power-are-slowing-the-energy-transition/?sh=eb69d9e135c0>

States Weigh Making Industry Pay Millions for Solar Panel Waste

- Deluge of solar panel waste expected after 2030
- Only one state, one county have solar panel takeback rules

More states are considering who will foot the bill for recycling the surge of solar panel waste expected to materialize over the next couple of decades... Estimates put the cost of recycling all the panels in a typical 100-megawatt utility system at as much as \$11.2 million. Recycling panels for the nation's largest solar farms, some of which have a 500-plus megawatt capacity, could run much higher—Drew Hutchinson, *Bloomberg Law*, October 19, 2023: <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/states-weigh-making-industry-pay-millions-for-solar-panel-waste>

To Save Solar Panels from Landfills, Startup is Smashing Them Instead

Inside a noisy industrial plant on the outskirts of Yuma, Ariz., there's a machine that smashes old solar panels into bits. It can handle 10 panels a minute, as many as 7,500 a day, extracting bits of copper and silver and aluminum, and pulverizing most of the rest into a gritty powder... It's the biggest U.S. site for recycling old photovoltaic panels—Will Wade [*Bloomberg*] Republished in *The Keene Sentinel*, November 1, 2023: https://www.sentinelsource.com/news/national_world/to-save-solar-panels-from-landfills-startup-is-smashing-them-instead/article_97279121-8459-5421-88f5-372f469ab293.html

Upcoming Conferences and Events

Oregon Solar + Storage Conference – November 7-9 in Portland, OR

This year 2023 OSSIA Conference is going to be bigger and better than ever: Networking, Career Fair, Continuing Education, Energy Trust of Oregon programs, What's new for Oregon Solar, grants, programs

codes, and more. [Click here for more information and to register.](#) [Click here to view agenda.](#)

IREC 2023 Vision Summit – November 9 in Minneapolis, MN and Virtual

This year's one-day summit will focus on the interconnection of distributed clean energy. The Summit brings together clean energy stakeholders for a deep dive into policies and practices that are essential for all Americans to benefit from clean energy. [Click here for more information to to register.](#)

Building the Foundation for Energy Resilient Communities: Clean Energy Group's Resilient Power Fund Programs' 2022 Impact – November 14 Webinar

Panelists will discuss Clean Energy Group's (CEG) Technical Assistance Fund (TAF) and the Resilient Power Leadership Initiative (RPLI), and the findings of CEG's annual impact report. CEG staff will be joined by TAF engineering partners and a 2022 RPLI awardee. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

NWEC Clean & Affordable Energy Conference – December 6 in Portland, OR

Panelists will discuss how utility planning should change to deliver equitable and affordable outcomes, the role of energy efficiency and distributed energy resources for vulnerable populations, and how the Bonneville Power Administration needs to modernize to drive forward the clean energy transition. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

Accelerating the Energy Transition – January 17-19 in San Diego, CA

: San Diego, CA January 17-19

Inter Solar North American (ISNA) and Energy Storage North America (ESNA)'s annual solar + storage event. [Click here for more information and to register.](#)

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