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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

<http://www.energy.wsu.edu/solarnewsbriefs.aspx>

Oregon News

Wyden: Were Panels in Oregon Solar Farms Made with Forced Labor?

A Chinese solar energy firm doing business in Central Oregon has come under the scrutiny of Oregon's U.S. senators for possible ties to forced labor practices in China's westernmost province, Xinjiang... Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., has asked U.S. Customs and Border Protection authorities to investigate the source of solar panels used by GCL New Energy Holdings Ltd. to determine if any of the parts were sourced from Xinjiang—Michael Kohn, *Capital Press*, Feb 2, 2024:

https://www.capitalpress.com/state/oregon/wyden-were-panels-in-oregon-solar-farms-made-with-forced-labor/article_efba45eb-08ce-57ad-97d6-daa0d4413906.html

PGE Issues All-Source RFP for Dispatchable, Renewable Generation

Portland General Electric (PGE) issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) seeking bids for resources that can provide non-emitting dispatchable capacity and renewable generation projects—Sean Wolfe, *Power Engineering*, Feb 5, 2024: <https://www.power-eng.com/renewables/pge-issues-all-source-rfp-for-clean-renewable-generation/>

A Solar Developer Sent Big Checks to Lawmakers Who Could Clear the Way for His Clean-Energy Ambitions

In the week prior to the 35-day session of the Oregon Legislature, a little-known political action committee whipped out its checkbook... Records show the Clean Energy for Oregon PAC contributed nearly \$100,000 on Jan. 29 to lawmakers crucial to the prospects of a bill that would remove state oversight of new energy facilities proposed on federal lands. The recipients included the sponsors of House Bill 4090, relevant committee members, and Democratic legislative leaders. In many cases, the Clean Energy checks were among the largest that lawmakers have ever received—Nigel Jaquiss, *Willamette Week*, Feb 21, 2024: <https://www.wweek.com/news/2024/02/21/a-solar-developer-sent-big-checks-to-lawmakers-who-could-clear-the-way-for-his-clean-energy-ambitions/>

Washington News

Washington State Community Solar Program and the Projects Under Way Map

To expand access to the benefits of renewable energy through community solar projects, in 2022 the Washington State Legislature passed [2SHB 1814](#) and Governor Jay Inslee signed the legislation into law. The legislation directs the WSU Energy Program to implement and administer a community solar incentive program, now known as the [Community Solar Expansion Program](#), to provide \$100 million in payments – over 10 years – for the development of projects benefiting low-income individuals, low-income service providers, and qualifying tribal or public agencies. As of January 2024, the Program has approved more than a dozen community solar projects. View the Program [map](#) to see where projects are now under way.

Rising Energy Costs and Climate Goals have a Common Solution: Community Solar Policy: Opinion

Legislative hearings this past month show a groundswell for community solar, with hundreds registering support for this clean energy source at public hearings... At a time when communities and consumers across the state are demanding locally produced energy that is more affordable and reliable, our state leaders in Olympia have a real opportunity to seize this momentum and deliver on what's clearly a resounding mandate—Mason Rolph and Derek Chernow, *Tri-City Herald*, [republished] *Yahoo! News*, Feb 1, 2024: [Click here to read more](#).

Developer: Washington Council Gutting Horse Heaven Power Project

Scout Clean Energy says a Washington state council will gut the proposed Horse Heaven wind and solar installation if it requires half of the planned wind turbines to be cut from the project. The project's power output would be slashed, running counter to Washington's energy policy, Scout President and CEO Michael Rucker said in a letter to the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Feb 2, 2024: https://www.capitalpress.com/climate_changed/developer-washington-council-gutting-horse-heavens-power-project/article_ff31613c-c12f-11ee-a8c8-372649796f05.html

Utility Opposition Stymies Fair Access to Community Solar Act in Washington

Washington state was home to the first community solar project in the nation; but it is no longer the leader. In fact, it ranks 31st in the nation in community solar deployment. Despite best efforts by legislators to advance community solar in the state with passage of The Fair Access to Community Solar Act, it was recently stymied for another year due to utility opposition—Anne Fischer, *pv magazine*, Feb 2, 2024: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/02/02/utility-opposition-stymies-fair-access-to-community-solar-act-in-washington/>

Washington Solar Panel Incentives: Net Metering, Tax Breaks and More

Washington State has positioned itself as a leader in renewable energy incentives, offering a suite of benefits for residents and businesses looking to adopt solar power. The state recognizes the importance of sustainable energy and has put forward multiple initiatives to make solar panel installation more affordable and attractive—Matthew Lynch, *The Tech Advocate*, Feb 2, 2024: <https://www.thetechadvocate.org/washington-solar-panel-incentives-net-metering-tax-breaks-and-more/>

Largest Proposed Wind Farm in WA Slashed in Half, Firefighting Issues are Part of the Problem

A controversial wind farm that was set to be the largest in Washington has been slashed in half. The proposed project outside the Tri-Cities has raised concerns about endangered hawks and viewsheds.

However, the project developer said these new restrictions could be bad for renewable energy development in the state... Scout Clean Energy also has plans to build solar arrays and battery storage at the site—Courtney Flatt, KUOW, Feb 5, 2024: https://www.kuow.org/stories/largest-proposed-wind-farm-in-wa-slashed-in-half-firefighting-issues-are-part-of-the-problem?utm_medium=email

Solar Project Water Rights Bill Fails in Washington State Legislature

A bill requiring future solar projects to show proof of water rights has died in the legislature.

County commissioners from Yakima and Kittitas testified in support of senate bill 5992.

This change would have required any large solar farm looking for approval to show proof of water rights secured for the project—Hunter Phipps, KIMA TV, Feb 5, 2024: <https://kimatv.com/news/local/solar-project-water-rights-bill-fails-in-washington-state-legislature>

Puget Sound Energy Awards More than \$780,000 in Solar Installation Grants

Puget Sound Energy is continuing its Green Power Solar Grant awards for the seventh consecutive year, ushering out \$782,599.12 to nine local organizations and tribes across our service area. All recipients range from local non-profits and tribal entities serving low-income and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community members. In addition to saving recipients money on their utilities, the projects will serve to advance access to clean energy in the region—Puget Sound Energy [Press Release], Feb 13, 2024: <https://www.pse.com/en/press-release/details/Puget-Sound-Energy-awards-more-than-780k-in-solar-installation-grants>

Commerce Invests \$8.1 Million to Expand Renewable Energy Use, Strengthen Washington's Electric Grid

The Washington State Department of Commerce today announced 14 grants awarded through the Clean Energy Fund (CEF) that will expand the use of renewable energy in the state's electrical grid. These projects are for numerous innovative clean energy technologies, including battery energy storage systems and microgrids... "Commerce is dedicated to the state's climate commitment goals, and to ensuring that those benefits are experienced across the state for all communities," said Commerce Director Mike Fong—Washington State Dept. of Commerce, [Press Release], Feb 29, 2024: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov/news/press-releases/commerce-invests-8-million-to-expand-renewable/>

Clean Energy and Power Grid Projects in Washington Land Federal and State Funding

Clean energy projects for Washington groups including public utilities, the Yakama Nation, and others will receive funding from grants announced this week by the [U.S. Department of Energy](#) and the [state's Department of Commerce](#)... The Yakama Nation will receive up to \$32 million from DOE to accelerate a project to create a "cutting-edge system" that will transform open-water irrigation canals into an in-ground pipeline system that will generate micro-hydropower and solar energy... The project includes additional plans to install solar panels on the Yakama Nation's land in areas that do not overlap with cultural resources. The effort also has a workforce component, training and hiring tribal members to do some of the work—Lisa Stiffler, *Geekwire*, Feb 29, 2024: <https://www.geekwire.com/2024/clean-energy-and-power-grid-projects-in-washington-land-federal-and-state-funding/>

Washington Lawmakers Move to Rein in Unscrupulous Rooftop Solar Companies

Spend much time online and you are bound to be served a few ads tempting you to go solar at no cost.

But there is no such thing as “free” rooftop solar power systems in Washington, according to local utilities and the state’s lead trade association for the solar sector. Out-of-state sales lead generators and marketing companies are responsible for many of the dubious solar energy ads you encounter online—Tom Banse, *Washington State Standard*, Mar 1, 2024:

<https://washingtonstatestandard.com/2024/03/01/washington-lawmakers-move-to-rein-in-unscrupulous-rooftop-solar-companies/>

National News

FEMA Includes Solar Microgrids in Net-Zero Disaster Response Program

Expanding on the Biden-Harris Administration’s investments in the nation’s climate resilience, today Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro N. Mayorkas and [FEMA](#) Administrator Deanne Criswell announced that the agency will expand funding to tackle the climate crisis, improve resilience and cut energy costs through net-zero projects... For the first time, FEMA will fund net-zero energy projects, including solar, through its Public Assistance grant program, which covers rebuilding schools, hospitals, fire stations and other community infrastructure investments post-disasters—Billy Ludt, *Solar Power World*, Jan 30, 2024: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/01/fema-includes-solar-microgrids-in-net-zero-disaster-response-program/>

Across the Country, Houses of Worship are Going Solar

Across the country, houses of worship are pursuing solar systems... As of 2021, about 2 percent of houses of worship in the United States have solar systems, according to Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, which the University of California manages for the U.S. Department of Energy. That’s disproportionately high; houses of worship make up only 0.6 percent of all non-residential buildings—Lizzy Ross, *Grist*, Jan 31, 2024: <https://grist.org/buildings/more-churches-plugging-solar-power/>

The Solar Policy Scoop: February 2024

A guide to recent legislation and research throughout the country [includes Washington, Idaho, Western US]—Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, Feb 5, 2024: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/02/the-solar-policy-scoop-february-2024/>

Form 5695 Instructions: How to Claim the Solar Tax Credit

If you're considering solar or you already have a solar system on your property, you've probably heard about the federal solar tax credit, also known as the [Investment Tax Credit \(ITC\)](#). The ITC is one of the best ways to save money when you go solar because it reduces your overall costs by thousands of dollars... There's plenty of information out there about the value of the ITC, but figuring out how to claim the credit when it comes time to file your taxes is another story. In this article, we'll walk you through the step-by-step instructions of how to claim your federal solar tax credit in 2024—Emily Walker, *EnergySage*, Feb 7, 2024: <https://www.energysage.com/solar/how-do-i-claim-the-solar-tax-credit>

Super Bowl to be Hosted in First 100% Renewable Energy NFL Stadium

Super Bowl LVIII will pit the Kansas City Chiefs against the San Francisco 49ers in Las Vegas, Nevada on Sunday, February 11. This will be the first Super Bowl that takes place in Allegiant Stadium, home of the

Raiders, which is 100% powered by renewable energy... Solar energy is the dominant renewable energy source for the Las Vegas Raiders stadium, whose organization in 2019 entered a 25-year energy supply agreement with NV Energy to purchase generation from an off-site solar array managed by the utility—Ryan Kennedy, *pv magazine*, Feb 7, 2024: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/02/07/super-bowl-to-be-hosted-in-first-100-renewable-energy-nfl-stadium/>

US Solar Dominates New Build as Developers Widen Search

Solar installations will account for “almost all growth” in U.S. power generation in 2024-2025, increasing solar’s share of power production from 4% in 2023 to 5.6% this year and 7% in 2025, the U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) said last month—Neil Ford, *Reuters*, Feb 8, 2024:

<https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/us-solar-dominates-new-build-developers-widen-search-2024-02-08/>

Does Your Project Qualify for Tax Credits? It Depends How ‘Project’ is Defined

Whether a renewable energy project qualifies for tax credits depends on how “project” is defined. More precisely, the meaning of “single project” for energy tax credit purposes varies across contexts and can lead to disparate outcomes... The “single project” question bears upon eligibility for tax credits in several respects. The first is size: projects with a capacity of under one megawatt measured in alternating current (MW(AC)) are excepted from prevailing wage and apprenticeship (PWA) requirements. Further, projects located in or serving residents of certain low and middle income (LMI) communities can apply to be awarded a 10-20 percent bonus investment tax credit (ITC), so long as such project is under 5 MW(AC)—David Burton, *Renewable Energy World*, Feb 9, 2024: [Click here to read more.](#)

DOE Challenges Solar Industry to Triple Community Solar by the End of 2025

At the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)’s National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) Annual Summit today, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jeff Marootian challenged the community solar industry to commit to meeting the NCSP target of 20 gigawatts (GW) of community solar by 2025—up from seven GW today. DOE also launched several new initiatives aimed at supporting the deployment of community solar, a critical tool for achieving DOE’s goal of 100% clean electricity by 2035 and net-zero carbon emissions by 2050 while providing an equitable pathway to renewable energy for all Americans—U.S. Dept. of Energy, Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, *Bulletin*, Feb. 14, 2024: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEERE/bulletins/38a85d2>

Rep. Schiff Introduces Renewable Roadsides Act to Harness Solar Energy Along Federal Highways

Today, Representative Adam Schiff (D-Calif.) introduced the *Renewable Roadsides Act*, which aims to start the process of transforming landscapes alongside federal highways to house increased solar energy infrastructure. The bill would direct the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Department of Energy (DOE) to study the feasibility of developing solar energy generation and storage facilities, as well as electrical transmission and distribution infrastructure, on land adjacent to federal highways—Adam Schiff, [Press Release], Feb 20, 2024: <https://schiff.house.gov/news/press-releases/rep-schiff-introduces-renewable-roadsides-act-to-harness-solar-energy-along-federal-highways>

Rooftop Solar has Technical Potential to Meet 45% of U.S. Electricity Demand

Among the leading sources of electricity, solar has the unique advantage of being able to be installed in a distributed fashion, integrating it with the built environment, preserving land and reducing transmission infrastructure needs... A report from Environment America, "[Rooftop Solar on the Rise](https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/02/20/rooftop-solar-has-technical-potential-to-meet-45-of-u-s-electricity-demand/)," celebrated the roughly 10x growth that rooftop solar has undergone in the past decade, and laid out the long runway for growth that lies ahead—Ryan Kennedy, *pv magazine*, Feb 20, 2024: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/02/20/rooftop-solar-has-technical-potential-to-meet-45-of-u-s-electricity-demand/>

New Resources: What Nonprofits Need to Know When Applying for Direct Pay

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 (IRA) updated and expanded the Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for solar and battery storage resilient power projects. The ITC, which was previously set at a 26% credit for 2023 and a 10% credit for every year after that, was updated and raised to cover 30% of the eligible project installation costs through 2032. This change significantly increases the anticipated savings for solar projects and will help create stability in the market over the next decade—Anna Adamsson, *Clean Energy Group*, Feb 22, 2024: <https://www.cleaneenergy.org/what-nonprofits-need-to-know-about-the-investment-tax-credit/>

Department of Agriculture, Department of Energy Launch Initiative to Help Farmers Reduce Costs with Underutilized Renewable Technologies as part of President Biden's Investing in America Agenda

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today are launching a new initiative to help farmers cut costs and increase income using underutilized renewable technologies including smaller-scale wind projects. Through the Rural and Agricultural Income & Savings from Renewable Energy (RAISE) initiative, USDA is setting an initial goal of helping 400 individual farmers deploy smaller-scale wind projects using USDA's Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)—[Click here for more information](#).

Biden Administration Taps \$366M to Fund Clean Energy for Native American Tribes and Rural Areas

The federal government will fund 17 projects across the U.S. to expand access to renewable energy on Native American reservations and in other rural areas, the Biden administration announced Tuesday. The \$366 million plan will pay for solar, battery storage and hydropower projects in sparsely populated regions where electricity can be costly and unreliable. The money comes from a [\\$1 trillion infrastructure law](#) President Joe Biden signed in 2021—AP Staff, KING 5 News, Feb 28, 2024: <https://www.king5.com/article/tech/science/environment/biden-administration-366m-fund-clean-energy-native-american-tribes-rural-areas/281-9a1adee1-5a86-4f49-bb75-916d6225b8df>

Final Rules on IRA Provisions Further Expand Access to Tax Credits

The U.S. Department of the Treasury and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) released final rules on key provisions in the Inflation Reduction Act to expand the reach of the clean energy tax credits. The Inflation Reduction Act created two new credit delivery mechanisms—elective pay (or direct pay) and transferability—that are meant to 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—Renewable Energy World, Mar 5, 2024: <https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/storage/final-rules-on-ira-provisions-expand-access-to-tax-credits/>

Agrivoltaics News

World's Foremost Authority On Solar Sheep Advising Wyoming \$500 Million Solar Farm

One of the most important consultants on a proposed Wyoming energy project is a sheep expert from Oregon... When Florida-based BrightNight LLC decided to develop its 500-megawatt solar farm near Glenrock, Wyoming, in a way to also graze sheep on the same land, they wanted to stay true to the local landowner's sheep herding practices... Enter Oregon State University Associate Professor Chad Higgins, the world's foremost authority in the world on using land for both agriculture and solar power— Pat Maio, *Cowboy State Daily*, Feb 9, 2024: <https://cowboystatedaily.com/2024/02/09/oregon-sheep-expert-important-to-500-million-wyoming-solar-farm/>

Community Solar

'State of Community Solar' Report Predicts 120% Growth Over Next 5 Years

In the next five years, community solar is expected to grow nearly 120% and at least 6 GW of capacity is expected to come online in existing markets, according to a new report from Arcadia... The first edition of the "State of Community Solar" report highlights areas for potential growth in 2024 and identifies challenges that need to be overcome to allow the industry to achieve its full potential. It predicts "tremendous" growth, Arcadia says. Read the full report available [here](https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/community-solar/state-of-community-solar-report-predicts-120-growth-over-next-5-years/)—*Renewable Energy World*, Feb 9, 2024: <https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/community-solar/state-of-community-solar-report-predicts-120-growth-over-next-5-years/>

NREL Estimates 1TW of Potential Community Solar in the US

The US has the potential to add nearly 1TW of community solar capacity if all technically viable community solar is deployed, according to the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL)... In a recent report, called '[Technical Potential and Meaningful Benefits of Community Solar in the United States](https://www.nrel.gov/technical/potential/meaningful-benefits-of-community-solar-in-the-united-states/)', NREL estimated technical potential for community solar capacity deployment with two different regimes, one dubbed Limited Access, with 967GWac, while the Reference Access more than trebles that number with 2.9TWac— Jonathan Touriño Jacobo, *PV-Tech*, Feb 15, 2024: <https://www.pv-tech.org/nrel-estimates-1tw-potential-us-community-solar/>

DOE Urges Industry to Hit 20 GW of Community Solar by End of 2025

At the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE)'s National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) Annual Summit, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Jeff Marootian challenged the community solar industry to commit to meeting the NCSP target of 20 GW of community solar by 2025, up from seven GW today— *Renewable Energy World*, Feb 16, 2024: <https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/community-solar/doe-urges-industry-to-hit-20-gw-of-community-solar-by-end-of-2025/>

US Community Solar Market Should Reach 14 GW by 2028

A [new report](#) from Wood Mackenzie expects the cumulative U.S. community solar market to surpass 14 GW by 2028. The WoodMac report, in collaboration with the Coalition for Community Solar Access

(CCSA), found that annual installation volumes reached 1 GW for the third consecutive year in 2023, and 8% annual growth is expected through 2028—Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, Feb 21, 2024: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/02/us-community-solar-market-should-reach-14-gw-by-2028/>

Energy Storage Boosts Community Solar Adoption Nationwide

Community solar, a “solar for all” model that allows businesses and individuals to subscribe to electricity credits generated by locally sited solar projects, is a quickly growing market segment in the United States. Midway through 2023, the installed community solar market reached nearly 6 GW, with projects in 41 states and Washington, D.C. A helpful driver for even more community solar to get adopted nationwide might be just adding energy storage—Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, Feb 26, 2024: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2024/02/energy-storage-boosts-community-solar-adoption-nationwide/>

Reports

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>

Upcoming Conferences and Events

OSSIA Annual Member meeting Mar 15, Crowne Plaza Portland Convention Center

Oregon solar + Storage Industries Association Annual Member in-person only meeting. Everyone Must register if they wish to attend: [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](#).

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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