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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

### Utility Portland General Electric Launches 4MW Virtual Power Plant Pilot in Oregon

Portland General Electric Company is set to launch a pilot program that will incentivize installation and connection of 525 residential energy storage batteries that PGE will dispatch, contributing up to four megawatts of energy to PGE's grid. The distributed assets will create a virtual power plant made up of small units that can be operated individually or combined to serve the grid, adding flexibility that supports PGE's transition to a clean energy future. When the program launches this fall, incentives will be available to residential customers across PGE's service area. Rebates will be available to customers within three neighborhoods participating in PGE's Smart Grid Test Bed, and income-qualified customers participating in Energy Trust of Oregon's Solar Within Reach offer—*CISION PR Newswire*, July 1, 2020: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/pge-program-will-transform-hundreds-of-homes-into-a-virtual-power-plant-301086514.html>

### Farmers Object to 3,900-Acre Oregon Solar Project

Farmers recently objected to a 3,900-acre solar project in Oregon's Lake County that has been recommended for approval by state regulators. Critics recently lodged their objections against a 3,900-acre solar facility in southeast Oregon, signaling a new phase in the regulatory battle over the project. The Obsidian Solar Center near Christmas Valley, Ore., is recommended for approval by state regulators but must still pass muster with the Energy Facility Siting Council—Mateusz Perkowski, *Capital Press*, July 23, 2020: [https://www.capitalpress.com/state/oregon/farmers-object-to-3-900-acre-oregon-solar-project/article\\_66d67b08-cc7c-11ea-878f-034843ff1617.html](https://www.capitalpress.com/state/oregon/farmers-object-to-3-900-acre-oregon-solar-project/article_66d67b08-cc7c-11ea-878f-034843ff1617.html)

## Washington News

### **Solar Power Sees Growth Following Community Investment Program**

Seven years after a Western Solar crew climbed onto the Anacortes Middle School roof to install dark blue, shimmery panels that can harness the energy of the sun, the Skagit Community Solar Program that sponsored the installation recently came to a close. During the intervening years, Skagit Community Solar achieved four more projects, and the use of solar power on public and private buildings in the region grew—Kimberly Cauvel, *GoSkagit*, July 18, 2020: [https://www.goskagit.com/news/solar-power-sees-growth-following-community-investment-program/article\\_d91f4847-4ca2-5a77-a779-dbc0172aff4d.html](https://www.goskagit.com/news/solar-power-sees-growth-following-community-investment-program/article_d91f4847-4ca2-5a77-a779-dbc0172aff4d.html)

### **PSE Awards Local Organizations Funding for New Solar Installations**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted families throughout Washington, local organizations that have been helping them will receive support from Puget Sound Energy. PSE will grant nearly \$580,000 to 10 organizations throughout its service area for new solar installations which will total 235 kW of new installed solar enough to power/or save nearly 240,000 kWh. This will help local organizations by reducing operating costs while also helping the environment by producing green power. The ten recipients are Anacortes Housing Authority, Community Youth Services, Family Support Center, Homes First, King County Housing Authority, Kulshan Land Trust, Lummi Nation Housing Authority, Muckleshoot Housing Authority, Lydia Place and Opportunity Council—*Thurston Talk*, August 4, 2020: <https://www.thurstontalk.com/2020/07/14/pse-awards-10-local-organizations-funding-for-new-solar-installations/>

### **PSE Grants Fund Five Low-Income Solar Projects in Washington State via Western Solar**

During the summer and fall of 2020, Western Solar will be installing solar panels for five low income and transitional housing organizations in Whatcom and Skagit Counties as part of Puget Sound Energy's Green Power Grants. PSE has made \$580,000 available for Green Power Grant projects, capped at \$75,000 per project, with a focus on making solar accessible to housing support organizations—Chris Crowell, *Solar Builder*, July 14, 2020: <https://solarbuildermag.com/news/pse-grants-fund-five-low-income-solar-projects-in-washington-state-via-western-solar/>

### **Beyond the “Silver Lining” of Emissions Reductions: Clean Energy Takes a COVID-19 Hit**

In early March, the Washington state legislature passed a community solar incentives bill meant to help meet renewable energy goals and increase low-income communities' access to solar technology. The bill, HB 2248, enjoyed widespread stakeholder support; environmental justice groups, renewable energy coalitions, and utility companies were all on board. The day after the bill passed, Washington Governor Jay Inslee shut down public schools in response to the escalating COVID-19 pandemic—Kate S. Peterson, *Environmental Health News*, July 9, 2020: <https://www.ehn.org/covid-19-renewable-energy-2646366559.html?rebellitem=6#rebellitem6>

### **PUD 1 Celebrates Community Solar II Project**

Mason County PUD No. 1 unveiled their second community solar project at a drive-in ribbon cutting on Tuesday, July 28 at the PUD's new warehouse in Potlatch. After construction delays and rescheduling due to the pandemic, persistence paid off as over two dozen customers, community members, and employees came together under proper safety guidelines to celebrate the new solar array—*Mason Web*

TV.com, July 31, 2020: <http://masonwebtv.com/archives/40452>

## Industry News

### **NABCEP Accreditation Approved by Veterans Administration for GI Bill Reimbursement**

The North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) is proud to announce that the NABCEP Photovoltaic Associate (PVA) Program was recently approved by the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs to receive benefits under the GI Bill. Due to this momentous federal approval, veterans and military personnel transitioning to the civilian workforce can now [apply for reimbursement of exam fees for the NABCEP PVA exam](#). The PVA, PV Installation Professional, and Solar Heating Installer Board Certifications are currently eligible for reimbursement through the GI Bill—Kelly Pickerel, *Solar Power World*, June 2, 2020: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2020/06/nabcep-accreditation-approved-by-veterans-administration-for-gi-bill-reimbursement/>

### **Solar Panel Recycling has a Long Way to Go, and Silicon May be the Key**

Solar energy is really starting to get its wings, with utility and residential installation growing at a rapid clip. While these systems generally operate for two or three decades, there inevitably comes a time to take photovoltaic panels down for replacement. What happens then has a lot to say about solar's long-term bottom line. The opportunity is there to turn old PV panels into new ones, reducing the technology's environmental footprint. But in a paper published in *Nature Sustainability*, a group led by Garvin Heath at the U.S. National Renewable Energy Laboratory argues we have a long way to go—though they think they see the way—Scott K. Johnson, *Ars Technica*, July 15, 2020: <https://arstechnica.com/science/2020/07/solar-panel-recycling-has-a-long-way-to-go-and-silicon-may-be-the-key/>

## National News

### **New U.S. Solar Power Scheme Aims At Invisible Middle**

A vast middle ground of opportunity for solar power development is ripe for the picking if only somebody could see where it is. The U.S. Department of Energy sees it, and is determined to pick it. The agency is moving forward with a plan to kick start activity in the area of mid-sized arrays ranging from 50 kilowatts to 3 megawatts—Tina Casey, *Clean Technica*, June 22, 2020: <https://cleantechnica.com/2020/06/22/new-us-solar-power-scheme-aims-at-invisible-middle/>

### **Federal Energy Regulators Reject Attack on Rooftop Solar Policies**

Federal regulators on Thursday released a pair of decisions expected to impact the expansion of renewable power nationwide—one that was celebrated by environmentalists and clean energy advocates as a crucial win and another that critics warned "could lead to more pollution by propping up fossil fuel power plants"—Jessica Corbett, *EcoWatch*, July 17, 2020: <https://www.ecowatch.com/solar-panels-2646424582.html>

## COVID 19 and the Solar Industry

### **Nearly 650 Solar Companies Sign Letter to Congress Supporting Solar COVID-19 Recovery Legislation**

Nearly 650 solar companies sent a letter to Congress on July 13 galvanizing support for legislation that deploys clean energy to help rebuild the U.S. economy. The letter calls on members of Congress to pass

legislation that would push out deadlines for the solar Investment Tax Credit (ITC) and create a direct pay option, both of which would help the economy recover from COVID-19—Kelsey Misbrener, *Solar Power World*, July 13, 2020: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2020/07/650-solar-companies-send-letter-to-congress-supporting-solar-recovery/>

### **How COVID-19 is Pushing Cities to Change Solar Permitting for the Better**

In order to meet social distancing requirements brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, cities across the United States are moving permitting services, including solar, online. The International Code Council (ICC) recently surveyed its members and found that [65 percent](#) of local code permitting officials have moved to remote work in response to the pandemic. This sudden digital move has many local governments considering much-needed overhauls to their systems. To meet this urgent need, Rocky Mountain Institute is helping communities transition to NREL's recently launched [SolarAPP](#) (Solar Automated Permit Processing) online platform. SolarAPP aims to standardize the instant permitting process across the U.S. to align with best practices in countries leading the way on residential solar—Ryan Shea, Arthur Coulston & Rushad Nanavatty, *GreenBiz*, July 29, 2020: <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/how-covid-19-pushing-cities-change-solar-permitting-better>

## **Reports**

### **Wherever the Sun Shines: Bringing Solar to Low- and Middle-Income Communities**

A new guidebook based on research by YSE scholars offers a roadmap for installing rooftop solar panels in communities that are often overlooked when it comes to promoting renewable energy solutions. This guidebook is based on research by Kenneth Gillingham, associate professor of environmental and energy economics at the Yale School of the Environment, and Bryan Bollinger, associate professor of marketing at New York University, who convened a team of scholars and practitioners to generate insights on accelerating solar adoption in LMI communities. Read more and access the guidebook at: *Yale School for the Environment website*, July 16, 2020: <https://environment.yale.edu/news/article/wherever-the-sun-shines-bringing-solar-to-low-and-middleincome-communities/>

### **MIT Led Research Paper Says Covid-19 Shutdown Led to Increased Solar Power Output**

Shutdowns in response to the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in lowered air pollution levels around the world. Researchers at MIT, and in Germany and Singapore have found that this resulted in a significant increase in the output from solar photovoltaic installations in Delhi, normally one of the world's smoggiest cities. To continue reading and link to the report see—David L. Chandler, July 23, *SiTechDaily*, 2020: <https://scitechdaily.com/air-cleared-so-much-during-covid-19-shutdown-it-actually-increased-solar-power-output/>

## **Upcoming Conferences, Webinars, etc.**

### **Valuing Resilience in Solar+Storage Microgrids: A New Critical Load Tiering Approach, Webinar, Tuesday, August 11, 2020, 10:00 a.m. P.T.**

Finding an appropriate way to determine the value of resilience – keeping the lights on, essential loads powered, and critical services up and running – has been a common struggle for microgrid projects, particularly projects that are difficult to quantify community services. Based on real world experience

with the design and implementation of solar+storage microgrids, the nonprofit Clean Coalition has developed a standardized and straightforward methodology for valuing resilience. For more information and to register see: <https://clean-coalition.org/news/vor123-webinar-aug-2020/>

**GoGreen Conference, Seattle, WA, *Postponed* to September 8, 2020**

GoGreen empowers business decision makers with sustainability strategies, tools and connections to create positive change within their organizations by facilitating environmental, economic and social performance improvement through topics and best practices covered at each conference. Experience an action packed day of driving social and sustainable change in your organization. To learn more and to register: <http://seattle.gogreenconference.net/>

**Oregon Solar Energy Conference is Going Virtual. *Rescheduled* to October 6–8, 2020**

In 2019, the Oregon Solar Energy Conference hosted over 500 attendees representing over 220 companies. The conference offered over 20 hours registered for NABCEP CE. Mark your calendar for the 2020 conference. To submit session proposals and for further information see: <https://www.oseia.org/osec/>

**25th Annual National Solar Tour, Going Virtual, September 28–October 4, 2020**

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the American Solar Energy Society (ASES) and Solar United Neighbors (SUN) have decided to host an all-virtual National Solar Tour for the first time ever. During this week, solar owners and supporters will have a chance to connect, ask and answer questions, and participate in a nationwide virtual solar experience: To RSVP see: <https://www.nationalsolartour.org/>

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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](mailto:whitneya@energy.wsu.edu)

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