Solar Newsbriefs

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
Energy Program

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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

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Oregon News

Grant County Rancher Partners with Solar Energy Firm for First Large-Scale Agrivoltaic Project in the Nation

A Grant County rancher and a solar power company have partnered for a new project that could allow large-scale solar energy production and cattle ranching on the same land for the first time in Oregon — or anywhere in the country… The project, which aims to generate 1.5 megawatts of electricity when fully completed in fall 2024, will be placed next to an Oregon Trail Electric Cooperative substation adjacent to the ranch, with OTEC expected to buy power from Bear Valley Solar Pasture for the grid—Neil Nisperos, *Blue Mountain Eagle*, Mar 1, 2023: https://www.bluemountaineagle.com/news/grant-county-rancher-partners-with-solar-energy-firm-for-first-large-scale-agrivoltaic-project-in/article_a6ca0bc6-b4a5-11ed-b192-a7acb60a8ecf.html?utm_medium=email

SOU's Path to a 100% Solar-Powered Campus

Southern Oregon University (SOU) is introducing entrepreneurial new revenue streams designed to lessen its reliance on tuition hikes and state funding. While it plans to become the country's first 100% solar-powered campus, its ultimate goal goes even further. Situated on the sunny side of Oregon with 175 acres, SOU wants to establish itself as a solar energy producer for the region, introducing a new form of long-term revenue and sustainability—Natalia Hurt, *Oregon Business*, Mar 1, 2023: https://oregonbusiness.com/article/sponsored/item/19783-sou-s-path-to-a-100-solar-powered-campus

Solar Energy Helps Bend-La Pine Schools Reduce Carbon Footprint

At R.E. Jewell Elementary School in Bend, an enthusiastic trio of fifth graders recently huddled around a laptop to look at a webpage filled with bar graphs and line charts. But this wasn't math class or a lesson in finance… The students were using an online dashboard to monitor the energy produced by solar panels on the roof of their school… The 106 solar panels on top of Jewell Elementary produce 56 megawatt hours of electricity annually, generating about 10% of the school's power needs. According to the online dashboard, the amount of carbon offset is equal to planting 523 trees—Michael Kohn, *The Bulletin*, Mar 13, 2023: https://www.bendbulletin.com/localstate/bend-la-pine-schools-looks-to-solar-energy-to-reduce-carbon-footprint/article_4e143c60-bf07-11ed-8b3f-831690ecccc0.html

Redmond's Tiny Watts Power Solutions Provides Solar Panel Kits for Van Life
Redmond's Wes and Savana Watts are the original power couple… Tiny Watts Solar is a solar electric power company operating out of Redmond that developed a DIY kit that allows customers to take their vans off road and still have the comforts of home: heat, air conditioning, a stove and Wi-Fi… These rooftop solar kits generate and store electricity and do so without needing a noisy, smelly generator—Suzanne Roig, *The Bulletin*, Mar 23, 2023: https://www.bendbulletin.com/business/redmonds-tiny-watts-power-solutions-provides-solar-panel-kits-for-van-life/article_a4c68186-c8c5-11ed-9ea2-5fa6b0aa1a19.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily-headlines&utm_medium=email&utm_content=image

Oregon Utility Files IRP, Inaugural Clean Energy Plan
Portland General Electric, a public utility providing electricity to 51 Oregon cities, filed an Integrated Resource Plan and its inaugural Clean Energy Plan, which calls for a net zero power generation mix by 2040… PGE's roadmap to a sustainable energy mix includes the development of new utility-scale renewable projects like wind turbines and solar arrays, located both in-state and out-of-state, and power transmission upgrades to modernize the grid and bring clean energy to its 900,000 plus customers—Michael Schoeck, *pv magazine*, Apr 3, 2023: https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/04/03/oregon-utility-files-irp-inaugural-clean-energy-plan/

Washington News

PSE Awards Nearly $800K for Solar Installation Grants
Puget Sound Energy recently awarded $753,620 in grant funding to nine organizations and tribes in Washington to install new solar projects. The funding was made possible through PSE's Green Power and Solar Choice programs, a release said… "Distributing grants for new solar projects to nonprofits and tribal entities in our electric service area is particularly gratifying," PSE President and CEO Mary Kipp said in the release—Blake Peterson, *425 Business*, Mar 2, 2023: https://www.425business.com/news/puget-sound-energy-800k-solar-projects/article_dffe1ffa-6a9d-50ac-9a61-083319f47ceb.html?utm_medium=email

Avangrid's Lund Hill Solar Farm in Washington State Goes into Operation
Avangrid's 150-Megawatt (MW) Lund Hill solar farm in Klickitat County, Wash., went into commercial operation this week… It becomes the state's largest photovoltaic plant and will supply Puget Sound Energy's Green Direct program. This program allows large commercial and governmental participants to purchase 100 percent of their energy from dedicated, local renewable energy resources—Dave Kovaleski, *Daily Energy Insider*, Mar 2, 2023: https://dailyenergyinsider.com/news/38756-avangrids-lund-hill-solar-farm-in-washington-state-goes-into-operation/

Port Writes the Book on Sustainability
Port of Camas-Washougal officials have been promoting renewable energy sources lately — partnering with a county agency to install solar panels at its industrial park and taking the lead on installing electric vehicle chargers in East Clark County — and, now, the Port has literally written the book on how public agencies and businesses can improve their decarbonization efforts. In 2022, the local Port partnered with the New Buildings Institute, a Portland nonprofit energy performance organization, to produce a

guidebook for the Port's staff, tenants and partners—Doug Flanagan, *Casmas-Washougal Post-Record*, Mar 2, 2023: https://www.camaspostrecord.com/news/2023/mar/02/port-writes-the-book-on-sustainability/

Large-scale Solar Developments and Protected Lands – Can We Have Them Both?
The passage of Washington State's Clean Energy Transformation Act in 2019 mandates an electricity supply free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. Large-scale renewable energy projects are one way to achieve this mandate. Solar companies see this as an opportunity and are pursuing projects in the sunniest, least developed part of the state—the Columbia Plateau region—Karen Janowitz, Agriculture Climate Network, Mar 7, 2023:
https://www.agclimate.net/2023/03/07/large-scale-solar-developments-and-protected-lands-can-we-have-them-both/

Resilient Growth Keeps Coastal Community Action Program Giving Back
After a devastating fire in 2018, Grays Harbor County's Coastal Community Action Program (CCAP) found themselves uprooted… The remodeled CCAP Community Service Center includes 308 solar panels to build being self-sustainable into the very building, says Program Director for Assets and Facilities Scott Reynvaan. This was just one of many projects designed to keep operating costs low, stay green and ecologically-minded, and minimize the group's carbon footprint. In resiliency, they've discussed with Grays Harbor Emergency Management a plan to potentially bring the building off-grid in times of crisis—Kathryn Millhorn, *Thurston Talk*, Mar 10, 2023:
https://www.thurstontalk.com/2023/03/10/resilient-growth-keeps-coastal-community-action-program-giving-back/

EFSEC Asks County for Rep
The State of Washington's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) has sent a formal notice to Klickitat County requesting appointment of a representative to the council for the purposes of evaluating a proposed solar development site near Goldendale… EFSEC's letter to the county commissioners was likely cut and pasted from a previous document, one sent last year to Benton County, with attempts thereafter to customize it for Klickitat County. But a reference to Benton County remains in the letter to Klickitat County—Lou Marzeles, *Goldendale Sentinel*, Mar 15, 2023:
https://www.goldendalesentinel.com/news/efsec-asks-county-for-rep/article_fdbed56c-c349-11ed-b8d2-1ff1ea959c64.html

Washington Bill Could Help Ease Renewable Energy Development Tensions
In the Pacific Northwest, conversations about renewable energy can get pretty heated. Residents often raise concerns about fragmented wildlife habitats, disturbed cultural resources, and cluttered viewsheds… But a bill winding through the Washington legislature could help ease some of those tensions… House Bill 1216 would set up a formal process for "least conflict siting" which would help identify the least controversial places to build — and avoid common issues with renewable developments—Courtney Flatt, *OPB*, Mar 20, 2023:
https://www.opb.org/article/2023/03/16/washington-bill-could-help-ease-renewable-energy-development-tensions/

National News

IRS Releases Guidance on the Low-Income Communities Bonus Credit Program for Solar and Wind Facilities.

The Internal Revenue Service issued Notice 2023-17 providing guidance on the Low-Income Communities Bonus Credit Program established under Internal Revenue Code Section 48(e) including environmental justice solar and wind capacity limitations for qualified solar and wind facilities eligible for the Investment Tax Credit (ITC). Notice 2023-17 provides initial guidance on the overall program design, the application process, and criteria that will be considered in determining which applicants will receive an allocation. Additional guidance will be issued in the future—*National Law Review*, Mar 3, 2023: https://www.natlawreview.com/article/irs-releases-guidance-low-income-communities-bonus-credit-program-solar-and-wind?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2023-3-3NLREnvironment+Legal+News&utm_content=2077b6772d462f6193114b1d050864e1&utm_source=Robly.com

Lessons Learned From State Community Solar Program Caps

Research from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) looks at the role state program caps are playing in the community solar market. Program caps limit the total capacity of community solar that can be installed in a particular utility service territory or the entire state. In the past, state policymakers used program caps to pilot rapidly growing renewable energy programs—Brian Savage, *pv magazine*, Mar 6, 2023: https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/03/06/lessons-learned-from-state-community-solar-program-caps/

Renewable Generation Surpassed Coal and Nuclear in the U.S. Electric Power Sector in 2022

Last year, the U.S. electric power sector produced 4,090 million megawatthours (MWh) of electric power. In 2022, generation from renewable sources—wind, solar, hydro, biomass, and geothermal—surpassed coal-fired generation in the electric power sector for the first time. Renewable generation surpassed nuclear generation for the first time in 2021 and continued to provide more electricity than nuclear generation last year—Katherine Antonio, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Mar 27, 2023: https://www.eia.gov/todayinenergy/detail.php?id=55960

Foldable Tiny Homes Powered by Solar to Help House Homeless Population throughout the State

Gov. Gavin Newsom recently announced plans to deploy 1,200 tiny homes to four cities throughout the state to help house the large homeless population, which numbered at least 170,000 last year according to federal data. The state will spend about $30 million to build the homes which will go to Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose and Sacramento… The units, which cost from $25,000 to $65,000, are self-powered with renewable clean energy from solar panels and a battery storage system and can operate off the grid—Renee Eng, *Spectrum News*, Mar 30, 2023: https://spectrumnews1.com/ca/la-west/homelessness/2023/03/29/new-foldable-tiny-homes-powered-by-solar-to-help-house-homeless-population-throughout-the-state-?utm_medium=email

TV Show Illuminates Forgotten Story of Female Solar Energy Pioneer

But after watching "The Sun Queen," premiering on PBS's "American Experience" on Tuesday, you may ask yourself why… The Hungarian American biophysicist is considered the founding mother of solar power. But despite devoting her life to solar technology, her contributions are largely forgotten today—

Erin Blakemore, *The Washington Post*, Apr 1, 2023: https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/tv-show-illuminates-forgotten-story-of-female-solar-energy-pioneer/ar-AA19lyrw

USDA Accepting Applications for $1 Billion in Renewable Energy REAP Grants
U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack announced Friday (March 31) that USDA is accepting applications for $1 billion in grants to help agricultural producers and rural small businesses invest in renewable energy systems and make energy-efficiency improvements… USDA is making the $1 billion in grants available under the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP), with funding from the Inflation Reduction Act—Talk Business & Politics staff, *TB&P*, Apr 3, 2023: https://talkbusiness.net/2023/04/usda-accepting-applications-for-1-billion-in-renewable-energy-reap-grants/

Agrivoltaics

Solar Grazing Methods a Centerpiece of Inaugural Agrivoltaics Conference
Sheep grazers, bee pollinators, solar tracking hardware vendors and small to utility-scale project developers were among a diverse set of groups represented at the inaugural U.S. agrivoltaics conference this week that was located next to a gateway for U.S. travel, Chicago O'Hare International Airport… The first Solar Farm Summit, which took place March 14 to 15, drew an over-capacity filled Hilton hotel, as sheep grazers sat amongst seed vendors and community solar project developers alike—Michael Schoeck, *pv magazine*, Mar 16, 2023: https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/03/16/solar-grazing-methods-a-centerpiece-of-inaugural-agrivoltaics-conference/

Community Solar

DOE-Funded SolSmart Program Expands to Advance Equitable Solar Energy Adoption
The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) today announced an expansion of its SolSmart program to support and recognize local governments across the country who are taking steps to reduce barriers to solar energy access. The expanded program adds a new Platinum-level designation level for the most forward-looking communities, establishes new priorities around support for disadvantaged communities, and sets a goal of designating a total of 1,000 communities by 2027 in support of the Biden administration's goal of a clean electricity grid by 2035. The program has also extended its designation criteria to include solar plus battery storage, codes and standards, innovative financing, and data collection and metrics—*DOE, Office of Energy Efficiency & Rnewable Energy* [Press Release], Mar 24, 2023: https://www.energy.gov/eere/articles/doe-funded-solsmart-program-expands-advance-equitable-solar-energy-adoption

Creating a More Equitable Energy Ecosystem
The nexus between renewable energy and energy equity is gaining attention. Solar generation is central to electrifying and decarbonizing the country in the fight against climate change. About one-fifth of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions originate from residential energy use. Providing clean, renewable solar energy to historically marginalized households is imperative to maximize the effort to reduce carbon emissions—Matt I. Slavin, *Renewable Energy World*, Mar 28, 2023:

https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/creating-a-more-equitable-energy-ecosystem/

Reports

Distributional Benefits of Rooftop Solar Capacity

This paper explores the distribution of environmental benefits created by rooftop solar capacity in the United States. We find that benefits are increasing with income, indicating regressivity, but that households of color receive greater per capita benefits on average. Moreover, we document minimal efficiency-equity trade-off: capacity allocations that maximize total environmental benefits are nearly identical to allocations that maximize benefits received by disadvantaged groups. Thus, existing solar capacity forgoes up to $2 billion annually in environmental benefits as well as substantial improvements in distributional outcomes, further suggesting that the suboptimality of existing solar policy cannot be rationalized on equity grounds— Travis E. Dauwalter and Robert I. Harris, in the *Journal of the Association of Environmental and Resource Economics*, Mar 2023: https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/10.1086/721604

How Foundations Can Accelerate Solar for the Benefit of Under-Resourced Communities

This report explores how philanthropic foundations have supported the deployment of solar and solar plus battery storage (solar+storage) in low- and moderate-income (LMI) communities in the United States. It provides a menu of strategies that foundations can use to bring clean energy benefits to LMI households and communities. To read more and download the report—Vero Bourg-Meryer and Warren Leon, Clean Energy States Alliance [website], Apr 4, 2023: https://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/energize-your-impact/

Conferences and Events

Implementing Community Programs Alongside Resilience Hub Development: Webinar Apr 25

Resilient power – solar paired with battery storage (solar+storage) – can provide essential economic benefits and backup power to Resilience Hubs, community-serving facilities augmented to support residents and coordinate resource distribution and services, before, during and after an emergency. This Clean Energy Group (CEG) webinar highlights the efforts of two organizations implementing unique community programs that complement, and amplify, their efforts to build a resilience hub, including the installation of solar+storage—Clean Energy States Alliance [website]. For more info and to register: https://www.cesa.org/event/community-programs-resilience-hubs/

Least-Conflict Solar Siting on the Columbia Plateau: Final Gathering Apr 12 Zoom

The focus of the gathering is the draft composite map, showing least-conflict areas together with solar suitability areas (as identified by the project's solar industry mapping group). In addition to review and discussion of the draft composite and draft individual maps, attendees will learn how they may review and comment on them, and consider their various uses. For more info and to register: https://www.energy.wsu.edu/RenewableEnergy/LeastConflictSolarSiting.aspx

ASES Solar 2023: University of Colorado Boulder, Aug 8-11, 2023 + Online
Registration is now open for the American Solar Energy Society's 52nd Annual National Solar Conference, SOLAR 2023: Transforming the Energy Landscape for All. Register by May 15 to receive early bird discounts on conference passes, events, workshops, and tours. For more info and to register: https://ases.org/conference/

RE+ 2023, Las Vegas, NV, Sept 11-14, 2023
Solar, storage, microgrids, hydrogen, EV charging — we've got it all! With a record 900+ exhibitors and two floors of exhibits, this year's event will set up your business for success. For more info and to register: For more info and to to register: click here.

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