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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

Solar-Powered Trailers Help Fill Internet Dead Zones in Sherman County

Sherman County is turning to tiny, shiny, sun-powered trailers to fill gaps in high-speed internet coverage in Oregon's windswept wheat country. The coronavirus brought a new sense of urgency to the long-standing issue of bringing rural communities online—Bradley W. Parks, *OPB*, Nov. 17, 2020:

<https://www.opb.org/article/2020/11/16/rural-broadband-solar-power-sherman-county-oregon/>

Oregon Department of Energy Biennial Report Puts Spotlight on State's Energy Landscape

The Oregon Department of Energy published its 2020 [Biennial Energy Report](#) on November 1, with a focus on fundamental information about energy in Oregon as well as on emerging energy issues, from microgrids and energy resilience to transportation fuels to the effects of COVID-19 and climate change on the energy sector—*Oregon Department of Energy*, Nov. 12, 2020:

<https://energyinfo.oregon.gov/blog/2020/11/12/oregon-department-of-energy-biennial-report-puts-spotlight-on-states-energy-landscape>

Portland Clean Energy Fund Offers its First Climate Action Grants

Letty Martinez, Shiny Flanary and Xochitl Garnica spent the spring and summer taming weeds and planting crops on their new two-acre farm on Portland's Sauvie Island. They teamed up to rent the land for their farming collective, which takes donations so it can provide some of its produce to low-income customers for free. As the farm grows, they are hoping to add growing tunnels and a greenhouse with lighting and refrigeration powered by solar panels and batteries—Cassandra Profita, *NPR*, Nov. 17, 2020:

<https://www.opb.org/article/2020/11/17/sauvie-island-portland-oregon-clean-energy-fund/>

When the Good Outweighs Profit: Solar Companies Go Philanthropic

Energy access is a global issue, and funding is not always found where it is needed most. That is why many in the solar industry choose to blaze their own paths, setting up nonprofit organizations to bring PV to communities across the world that could use the help. Here is a look at three success stories in philanthropic efforts: Twende Solar, the Honnold Foundation and Solar Crowdfunder. Even a seemingly insignificant donation from one company and one person can make a big difference to many currently living in an unelectrified environment—Billy Ludt, *Solar Power World*, Nov. 3, 2020:

<https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2020/11/when-the-good-outweighs-profit-solar-companies-go-philanthropic/>

Washington

New Solar Project to Power 11K Homes in Washington State

A public utility company in Washington state has announced a partnership to develop a new solar project near Richland that would generate enough electricity for more than 11,000 homes, officials said. Energy Northwest will partner with Tucci Energy Services to build the 300-acre (120-hectare), 75-megawatt solar farm on leased land, The Seattle Times reported Monday. Construction is planned for 2022. “This underscores Energy Northwest’s commitment to affordably and reliably meeting the region’s electricity needs”, Energy Northwest CEO Brad Sawatzke said—*Yakima Herald*, Dec. 1, 2020:

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/northwest/new-solar-project-to-power-11k-homes-in-washington-state/article_7ffda252-70d5-5955-9fb6-dce6a5a52dce.html

Community Solar Success In Leavenworth

For six years now, the sun has shined down on the 96 solar panels atop the roof of the Icicle River Middle School in Leavenworth. The energy captured from that sunlight has generated 147,424 kilowatt hours of electricity in those six years, which after running through four inverters, was put back into the energy grid. Local donors and investors funded the Icicle River Middle School Community Solar Project in 2014, with the project conclusion occurring this year—Lisa Therrell, *Quad City Herald*, Dec. 1, 2020:

<https://www.qcherald.com/news/community-solar-success-leavenworth>

Solar Power Nonprofit Goes Digital to Bring Installation Instruction to Underserved Communities

When COVID-19 grounded travelers in early 2020, Chris Brooks and his team had to cancel more than a dozen teaching contracts in Africa, Central America, a Native American reservation and other locations around the U.S. Their nonprofit, Tacoma, Wash.-based [Remote Energy](#), had planned to travel to the largely lower-income communities to train teachers in how to instruct students in solar panel installation. Since 2017, the group of five solar industry experts had visited 25 countries to share their clean-energy skills with teachers. Due to the global pandemic, the organization had to quickly regroup and move their lessons online. It was not easy—Lisa Stiffler, *GeekWire*, Nov. 29, 2020:

<https://www.geekwire.com/2020/solar-power-nonprofit-goes-digital-bring-installation-instruction-underserved-communities/>

Clean Jobs Washington 2020

In the midst of a global pandemic and an economic recession, Washington’s clean energy economy—and its proven growth potential throughout the state—holds the key to a resilient economic recovery. Discussion of the impacts of Covid, and links to the report, Clean Jobs Washington 2020, which comes at

a critical juncture in the state's efforts to recover from the COVID-19 health and economic crises—*E2*, Nov. 24, 2020: <https://e2.org/reports/clean-jobs-washington-2020/>

Local Environmental Engineer Is a Trailblazer in Solar Energy

Ram Lam, owner of Silk Road Environmental in Centralia, has been creating solar water heaters for 12 years...His company specializes in solar hot water heaters. They do not produce any electricity, only hot water, which can be used for heating baths, showers, radiant flooring and can be modified to blow hot air through a house radiator. The solar hot water heaters use custom solar hot water tubes that were designed by Lam to produce heat more efficiently than traditional photovoltaic solar panels—Eric Trent, *The Daily Chronicle*, Nov. 11, 2020: http://www.chronline.com/business/local-environmental-engineer-is-a-trailblazer-in-solar-energy/article_08423b6a-246d-11eb-9606-af32cb054f80.html

Solar Industry

Silfab Solar Modules Surpass Industry's Most Rigorous Backsheet Durability Test

Silfab Solar, North America's leading PV module manufacturer, has excelled in the industry's most rigorous test for backsheet durability – once again reaffirming the company's superior manufacturing process. Results from PV Evolution Labs (PVEL) that subjected "real-world" stress tests on Silfab MWT modules showed no failures nor any evidence that the company's backsheets – one of the most essential components of a solar module – would degrade over Silfab's warranty period—*Cision PR Newswire*, Nov. 11, 2020: <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/silfab-solar-modules-surpass-industrys-most-rigorous-backsheet-durability-test-301170489.html>

The Solar Foundation and IREC to Unit With Expanded Impact

The Solar Foundation and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council (IREC) today announced they have signed an agreement to merge into a single, expanded nonprofit dedicated to the rapid adoption of clean energy. The merger will combine the strengths of two renowned national clean energy organizations, effectively doubling the staff and quadrupling the impact. The Solar Foundation is the leading national nonprofit dedicated to accelerating adoption of solar energy and related technologies and, since its relaunch in 2010, has had a remarkable ten-year track record of leading cutting-edge research, education, and capacity building programs. IREC has been trusted for its independent clean energy expertise for nearly 40 years, playing a critical role in building the foundation for rapid adoption of clean energy by tackling regulatory, workforce, and economic barriers—Gwen Brown, *IREC*, Nov. 12, 2020: <https://irecusa.org/2020/11/the-solar-foundation-and-irec-to-unite-with-expanded-impact/>

Solar Recycling

From Design to Recycling, Opportunities Abound to Make Solar More Circular

Solar has become a staple of the U.S. power generation mix in the last decade. Now that the industry is maturing, it is time to have a tough conversation: The solar industry needs to improve its circular practices. Like any industry, the solar industry has unique machinery and equipment; specifically, its photovoltaic (PV) cells have silicon, metal, glass and plastic components that are melded together in order to create a functioning solar panel—Myisha Majumder, *Greenbiz*, Nov. 6, 2020: <https://www.greenbiz.com/article/design-recycling-opportunities-abound-make-solar-more-circular>

What Happens to Solar Panels When They Stop Working?

For all of the idyllic visions of solar blanketing the globe, sun glinting off the glass like modernist amber waves, there is comparatively little consideration of the final resting place of those same panels: lying in landfills, their power sapped. The most environmentally friendly solution, of course, is recycling them instead—Ema Foehringer Merchant, *gtm²*, Nov. 24, 2020:

<https://www.greentechmedia.com/squared/the-lead/what-happens-to-solar-panels-when-they-stop-working>

Agrivoltaics

Project Promotes Solar Energy for Ag Land

The National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT) will launch an online information clearinghouse in 2021 to promote solar-energy development on agricultural lands while protecting — and even improving — those lands' agricultural capacity. NCAT was selected for a \$1.6 million cooperative agreement from the U.S. Department of Energy to develop the Agri-Solar Clearinghouse (ASC), a national information hub and professional network that connects researchers, technology companies, solar developers, landowners, farmers and consumers—*National Center for Appropriate Technology*, Nov. 24, 2020: <https://www.ncat.org/project-promotes-solar-energy-for-ag-land/>

Reports

How to Accelerate Solar Adoption for the Underserved

Berkeley Lab study finds certain policies and business models can lead to more equitable distribution of solar installations... In a new study published in *Nature Energy*, the Berkeley Lab researchers found that three of the five policy and business models they studied, including targeted financial incentives and leasing models, do increase adoption of solar photovoltaics (PV) among low- and middle-income households, thus increasing adoption equity, which the authors define as the degree to which adopter incomes reflect the incomes of the general population. Read more and access the full report at:

Berkeley Lab News Center, Nov. 9, 2020: <https://newscenter.lbl.gov/2020/11/09/how-to-accelerate-solar-adoption-for-the-underserved/>

New Report Makes the Case for Local Solar + Storage to Lead U.S. Transition to Clean Energy

Developing 247 GW of local rooftop and community solar and 160 GW of local energy storage is the most cost-effective way for the United States to transition to a clean energy system by 2050, while saving consumers up to \$473 billion on electricity. This is enough local solar to power over 25% of all U.S. homes. These are among the core findings of a new report, "[Why Local Solar for All Costs Less: A New Roadmap for the Lowest Cost Grid](#)," issued by Vote Solar, the Coalition for Community Solar Access and Sunrun—Kelsey Misbrener, *Solar Power World*, Dec. 1, 2020:

<https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2020/12/new-report-makes-case-for-local-solar-storage-lead-us-transition/>

Upcoming Conferences, Webinars, etc.

Greenlink Equity Map: Visualizing Equity Issues to Build Stronger Climate Solutions: December 8, 2020

Cities across the country have begun to recognize the importance of prioritizing equity and environmental justice when designing and implementing climate and sustainability strategies. However,

a lack of access to accurate and understandable equity data has presented a challenge to policy makers and community advocates alike. To help bridge this critical information gap, Greenlink Analytics and Upright Consulting Services partnered to launch the Greenlink Equity Map (GEM) and Process Guide. The Greenlink Equity Map is an online map designed to help visualize equity-related issues and how burdens are spread across communities. For more info and to register: *Clean Energy States Alliance* website: <https://www.cesa.org/event/greenlink-equity-map-visualizing-equity-issues-to-build-stronger-climate-solutions/>

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

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