



February 2, 2023

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.edu/solarnewsbriefs.aspx>

Oregon News

Grant to Help Fund Planning 'Microgrids'

A \$100,000 grant from the state Department of Energy is on the horizon for Wallowa Resources, as the group hopes to have a "performance agreement" completed this month, said Joe Basile, WR's community energy program manager. The grant, one of 21 that totaled \$12 million announced by the DOE in October, will go toward planning the construction of microgrids in Joseph, Wallowa and Enterprise, Basile said—Bill Bradshaw, *Wallowa County Chieftain*, Jan. 7, 2023:

https://www.wallowa.com/news/local/grant-to-help-fund-planning-microgrids/article_74b8ac90-8c6f-11ed-aa7f-2ffa791e469b.html

Phoenix-Talent Schools Want Fitness Playground, Solar Arrays

Using a combination of COVID-19 relief and grant funding, Phoenix-Talent School District hopes to upgrade numerous facilities, ranging from a "fitness playground" at the high school to solar arrays at its elementary and middle schools—Kevin Opsahi, *Mail Tribune*, Jan. 11, 2023:

<https://mailtribune.com/education/2023/01/11/phoenix-talent-schools-want-fitness-playground-solar-arrays/>

BLM Hosts Solar Energy Planning Meeting

As part of its ongoing effort to support responsible renewable energy development on public lands, the Bureau of Land Management is holding a public scoping meeting in Bend to solicit feedback on the recently announced programmatic environmental impact statement for the BLM's utility-scale solar energy planning. The Bend meeting will be held on February 2, 2023, from 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. It will take place at the DoubleTree by Hilton Bend, 300 NW Franklin Avenue, Bend, OR 97701—*My Central Oregon*, Jan. 19, 2023: <https://www.mycentraloregon.com/2023/01/19/blm-hosts-solar-energy-planning-meeting/>

Microgridging a Bridge, Library and an Industrial District in Suburbia

An ambitious multiuser microgrid plan for Tigard, Oregon – a suburb of Portland – calls for a microgrid concept or series of microgrids to supply power to a bridge, a library and an industrial district, with a main goal of protecting citizens from outage threats associated with wildfires, storms and earthquakes—Lisa Cohn, *Microgrid Knowledge*, Jan. 20, 2023:

<https://www.microgridknowledge.com/community-microgrids/article/21545865/multiuser-microgrid-plan-for-an-oregon-suburb-includes-a-bridge-library-and-industrial-district>

Oregon Department of Energy Announces New Round of Grant Funding

ODOE is now accepting applications for the second round of funding through our [Community Renewable Energy Grant Program](#). We are making \$12 million available to support planning and construction of renewable energy or energy resilience projects for Tribes, public bodies, and consumer-owned utilities. Grant dollars are available for four types of projects: planning a renewable energy project, planning a renewable energy project that also has a resilience component, construction of a renewable energy project, or construction of a renewable energy project with a resilience component—Oregon Department of Energy, *Newsletter*, Jan. 31, 2023:

<https://energyinfo.oregon.gov/blog/2023/1/31/january-2023-newsletter>

Washington News

EFSEC at Odds with Yakima County Commissioners on Solar Project Moratorium

The Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council says it has the authority to approve two solar farms in Yakima County despite a local moratorium on solar projects. EFSEC, which expedited the approval process for two proposed solar farms east of Moxee, outlined its reasoning in a Dec. 5 letter to the Board of Yakima County Commissioners, saying the application for the projects came in before the moratorium was enacted—Phil Ferolito, *Yakima Herald-Republic*, Jan. 6, 2023:

https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/efsec-at-odds-with-yakima-county-commissioners-on-solar-project-moratorium/article_32c57e0c-8d42-11ed-b828-8ff3ffbc0acd.html

Inslee Proposes Speeding Up Green-Energy Projects

Gov. Jay Inslee has moved to boost his administration's power to shepherd wind farms, transmission lines and other green-energy projects to completion in Eastern Washington. Under House Bill 1216, introduced Jan. 10 at the governor's request, the Inslee administration would help select projects obtain permits, opening a new path for energy companies to build—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Jan. 11, 2023:

https://www.capitalpress.com/climate_changed/inslee-proposes-speeding-up-green-energy-projects/article_9377f900-911b-11ed-a1be-836df6d02979.html?utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=daily-ag-updates-newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=read%20more

Two Proposed Solar Farms in Yakima County Run into Opposition

Speakers raised concerns about fire danger, wildlife and a lack of public input at a meeting considering permits for two Yakima County solar farm projects. The online public hearing was hosted Wednesday evening by officials with the state's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council—Joel Donofrio, *Yakima-*

Herald Republic, Jan. 13, 2023: <https://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/northwest/2-proposed-solar-farms-in-yakima-county-run-into-opposition/>

Student Microgrid Project Brings Sustainability, Resilience to Tulalip Tribes

A team of Washington State University Pullman senior electrical engineering students is bringing classroom learning to life through the design of a microgrid for an administration building on the Tulalip Indian Reservation. The year-long project is a collaboration with the Snohomish Public Utility District (PUD) and the Tulalip Tribes, a sovereign nation that is working to reach energy independence—Patty Kiebertz, *WSU Insider*, Jan. 19, 2023: <https://news.wsu.edu/news/2023/01/19/student-microgrid-project-brings-sustainability-resilience-to-tulalip-tribe/>

Washington House Introduces Bill to Ensure Equitable Access to Solar Power, Advance Energy Justice

Washington State Representative David Hackney (D-King County) today introduced HB 1509, a bill that would expand equitable access to the benefits of clean, reliable, affordable, and locally sited solar power to all Washingtonians. Co-sponsored by Representative Beth Doglio (D-Thurston County), the Fair Access to Community Solar Act is a clear priority for state lawmakers, whose recent progress in climate, clean energy, and environmental justice policymaking is due in no small part to the support and leadership of the Inslee administration—Coalition for Community Solar Access (CCSA), Jan. 20, 2023: <https://communitysolarnews.org/2023/01/wa-house-introduces-bill-to-ensure-equitable-access-to-solar-power-advance-energy-justice/>

State Offering \$35M in Grants for Solar Power

More than \$35 million in grants is up for grabs for Washington municipalities seeking to give a boost to their solar base. The state Department of Commerce is accepting applications through March 23 for its new Solar plus Storage for Resilient Communities program, which provides grants to install and manage solar and battery storage systems in community buildings. These include schools, libraries and buildings owned by local governments and nonprofits. For more information: [click here](#). Grant work begins July 1, according to the state agency—Lauren Ellenbecker, *The Columbian*, Jan. 20, 2023: https://www.columbian.com/news/2023/jan/20/state-offering-35m-in-grants-for-solar-power/?utm_medium=email

Agrivoltaics

U.S. Seeks Perfect ‘Reese’s Cup’ Mix of Farming and Solar Panels

Flat, sunny acres of land are prime real estate for solar energy developers who hold a key role in helping the U.S. meet its climate goals. But developers are often eyeing fields of wheat, corn, and hay; ranches roamed by cattle and sheep; and plots bursting with berries and lettuce. If built there, solar panels can level farms that feed the country. Yet federal energy officials and university researchers believe there is no conflict. The Energy Department is scaling up the emerging field of “agrivoltaics,” which seeks innovations in both solar technology and farming techniques that can produce clean energy and food at the same time, on the same plot of land—Daniel Moore and Maeve Sheehey, *Bloomberg Law*, Jan. 4, 2023: <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/environment-and-energy/us-seeks-perfect-reeses-cup-mix-of-farming-and-solar-panels>

New Solar Panels Allow Farmers to See the Light

Arable land is at an all-time premium. And as the world population—8 billion as of last November—continues to expand, there is ever-increasing pressure on farmland to produce not only more food but clean energy as well. In places such as Yakima, Washington, it has created competition for space as land-hungry solar arrays gobble up available fields. Last month, the state's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council approved plans to cover 1,700 acres of agricultural land with photovoltaic (PV) panels, brushing aside the county's moratorium on solar projects and fueling community concerns over the long-term impacts of losing cropland—Naoki Nitta, *Modern Farmer*, Jan. 16, 2023: <https://modernfarmer.com/2023/01/solar-panels-light-spectrum/>

Vertical PV for clean energy and crop production

Agrivoltaic installations with vertically oriented solar panels are increasingly being adopted and studied across the globe. In Somerset, California, German-designed Sunzaun vertical solar arrays were installed at a vineyard. Installer Sunstall developed the facility, which was composed of 43 450 W modules connected to a microinverter and two batteries. The minimalistic design used holes in the module frames to make a simple attachment to two piles, negating the need for a heavy racking system. The bifacial solar modules produce energy on both sides of the vertically oriented array—Ryan Kennedy, *pvmagazine*, Jan. 23, 2023: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/01/23/vertical-pv-for-clean-energy-and-crop-production/>

National News and Reports

Potentially Good News for Solar Energy During Wildfires

In the fall of 2020, smoke blanketed most of the contiguous United States as megafires scorched swaths of forests in the West. Scientists are finding in an ongoing study that despite the haze from far-off blazes, enough indirect sunlight was available to fuel the nation's burgeoning solar panel industry in 2020—Jenessa Duncombe, *Eos*, Jan. 18, 2023: <https://eos.org/articles/potentially-good-news-for-solar-energy-during-wildfires>

Could Solar Power Work in Space? Test Aims to Find Out

Among the many space-bound satellites aboard the SpaceX rocket launched earlier this week was a small prototype designed to harvest the power of the sun. Scientists are hoping to show that space-based solar power is more than a futuristic concept, and potentially the next big thing in clean energy. Weighing in at just 110 pounds, the prototype satellite called the Space Solar Power Demonstrator (SSPD) is part of a larger effort to test out space-based solar power called the Space Solar Power Project (SSPP)—Amy Thompson, *The Hill*, Jan. 6, 2023: https://thehill.com/policy/technology/3801343-solar-power-space-test/?utm_medium=email

U.S. DOE Signals Microgrid Funding Opportunity for Remote, Underserved Communities

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) has published a notice of intent (NOI) on a possible upcoming funding opportunity for microgrids for underserved and Indigenous communities in remote and islanded regions of the United States. If the FOA is released, approximately \$9.1 million in federal funds is expected to be available for awarding between six and eight new agreements for projects that would have a maximum duration of two years. The U.S. DOE said it intends to make the FOA available by the end of January—Peter Maloney, *American Public Power Association*, Jan. 9, 2023: <https://www.publicpower.org/periodical/article/doe-signals-microgrid-funding-opportunity-remote->

[underserved-communities](#)

U.S. DOE Launches \$10 Million Prize to Accelerate Community Solar in Underrepresented Communities

The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) today launched a slate of initiatives to support the deployment of equitable community solar projects and recognized projects exemplifying best practices in community solar. The [Community Power Accelerator™](#) and its \$10 million prize will leverage \$5 billion in private-sector financing commitments to help community-based organizations and other mission-aligned project developers access financing and build community solar projects, particularly in disadvantaged and underrepresented communities—U.S. DOE, Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy, Jan. 19, 2023:

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USEERE/bulletins/343beae>

U.S. DOE Launches Updated Mapping Tool to Optimize Renewable Energy Siting Decisions

The U.S. Department of Energy is relaunching a mapping tool designed to help identify areas of the country that are ideal for uses such as wind and solar farms, and has updated it to allow users to specify the type of project they are siting. The [Geospatial Energy Mapper](#), or GEM, launched in 2013 and has been “redesigned, rebranded and reengineered,” U.S. DOE’s Argonne National Laboratory said in a Tuesday [press release](#). The lab, which hosts the software, updated its architecture and made it more user-friendly—Diana DiGangi, *Utility Dive*, Jan. 12, 2023: https://www.utilitydive.com/news/energy-mapping-tool-solar-wind-argonne-modeling-geospatial/640227/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Issue:%202023-01-12%20Utility%20Dive%20Renewable%20Energy%20%5Bissue:47275%5D&utm_term=Utility%20Dive:%20Renewable%20Energy

Researchers Design Cost-Efficient Utility-Scale Solar Plant that Enhances Grid Stability

A team led by the U.S. Department of Energy’s Oak Ridge National Laboratory has developed a utility-scale design and control system for a hybrid solar power plant that can operate with both direct and alternating current—providing more flexibility, security, and reliability than similar plants operating today. Hybrid plants include not only solar arrays, but also batteries, to store energy captured from the sun—U.S. DOE’s Oak Ridge National Laboratory, *Renewable Energy World*, Jan. 23, 2023:

https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/researchers-design-cost-efficient-utility-scale-solar-plant-that-enhances-grid-stability/?utm_source=rew_weekly_newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=2023-1-25

Community Solar

Overcoming Barriers To Multifamily Solar, a Case Study by Olympia Community Solar

Throughout Washington more than a million residents living in multifamily housing are prevented from realizing the benefits of solar energy due to a lack of an enabling solar law. The problem is becoming increasingly universal as population density increases in our urban areas and more market-rate dwelling units are under one roof. This [report](#) presents a case study on installing solar energy on a multifamily housing project with meters for each housing unit. We will explore the barriers to solar presented by multifamily buildings and Washington state’s policy environment and how we overcame some of those barriers for the residents of one Washington State community—Mason Rolph, Olympia Community

Solar, Jan. 2, 2023: <https://olysol.org/multifamily-housing-case-study/>

Solar is Front and Center in the Fight for Energy Justice

Renewable energy in the form of community and rooftop solar can bring relief to people who are disproportionately affected by climate change, pollution, and rising energy prices. Many groups are working hard to open up access to solar and the recently passed U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) has a plan, backed by generous funding—Anne Fischer, *pV magazine*, Jan. 4, 2023: <https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2023/01/04/solar-is-front-and-center-in-the-fight-for-energy-justice/>

Sol-REIT Joins Department of Energy's National Community Solar Partnership with a Goal of \$175 Million in Funding for its Community Solar Segment by 2025

Sol-REIT, a structured finance partner to solar developers, has joined the Department of Energy's National Community Solar Partnership (NCSP) as part of the firm's commitment to fund greater than \$175 million in community solar projects by 2025. For solar developers with projects at or beyond NTP (notice to proceed), Sol-REIT provides construction capital and/or permanent debt that matches an asset's operational life while significantly reducing underwriting and diligence timelines for commercial, community, and aggregated residential solar projects—*Business Wire*, Jan. 11, 2023:

https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20230111005219/en/Sol-REIT-Joins-Department-of-Energy%E2%80%99s-National-Community-Solar-Partnership-with-a-Goal-of-175-Million-in-Funding-for-its-Community-Solar-Segment-by-2025/?feedref=JjAwJuNHystnCoBq_hl-RUhergpzmxLOUSc4WCCbz_B1XY7la_QvRyPB3BquP7h6i8aU6mBhBCITifNTyOAv1ms7ezsDpv-ktIH1aXVMLM0sbM9ygdgEy9R55hI7tpe

Community-Solar Industry Shoots for 30GW by 2030

On Wednesday, a national coalition of companies and nonprofit groups announced a big vision for community solar in the U.S.: 30 gigawatts by 2030. That's nearly six times the 5.3 gigawatts installed now. The Coalition for Community Solar Access, which counts companies Arcadia and Con Edison and nonprofits Groundswell and Grid Alternatives among its members, made the announcement at the Community Solar Power Summit in San Diego—Alison F. Takemura, *Canary Media*, Jan. 18, 2023:

https://www.yahoo.com/news/community-solar-industry-shoots-30-233800661.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuYmluZy5jb20v&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAFEIQhs4A1FOKhvN0I0qAqokxTmQ5_G0vFCKjENbMQS6jZyT12RHPgEMW0C5YhpJfcZK0d0Xg5n28SdBXABmbahgMh1uRiMkTs7yDcpjrYfhqIU2eplaOn1lp57DVSK3FRnEjOqhlxWGhd-S0OnBpTfy0Z6vRIECYLF_uP7oLx-L

Reports

Solar Equity and State Policy: A Survey of State Energy Agencies

This report explores how state energy agencies (SEAs) are currently working with community-based organizations (CBOs) on equitable solar policy, and the barriers to successfully implement these policies. The report is based on a survey of SEAs conducted by CESA in conjunction with Energy Trust of Oregon and Kim Wolske of the University of Chicago. Read more and access the report by Abbe Ramanan, Clean Energy States Alliance, Dec. 6, 2022: <https://www.cesa.org/resource-library/resource/solar-equity-and-state-policy/>

The Coal Cost Crossover 3.0

This report finds 99 percent of the existing U.S. coal fleet is more expensive to run compared to replacement by new solar or wind. Replacing coal plants with local wind and solar would also save enough to finance nearly 150 gigawatts of four-hour battery storage, over 60 percent of the coal fleet's capacity, and generate \$589 billion in new investment across the U.S.—Read more and download the report at: Energy Innovation, Jan. 28, 2023: <https://energyinnovation.org/publication/the-coal-cost-crossover-3-0/>

Conferences and Events

February ASES Webinar: Passive Solar Design for Homes Feb. 8, 2023 1:00 p.m. PST

The sun is a natural and reliable source of energy. Solar Energy can be used to create electricity, heat buildings, heat water, distill water, cook food, dry food, dry clothes, and power electric vehicles. This webinar will focus on how the sun can heat homes by incorporating basic Passive Solar design strategies to provide from 20-90 percent of a home's heating needs with little cooling penalties. Passive Solar energy can lower heating bills and allow PV (photovoltaic) systems to be downsized. Learn how the movement of the sun, siting, building shape, window placement, overhangs, porches, building mass, and insulation work together to warm and brighten homes—For more information and to register:

https://ases-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_quIPbamFQhucSN7a6f53tw?timezone_id=America%2FLos_Angeles

Inaugural North American Agrivoltaics Conference Seeks to Ignite Dual-Use Solar Renaissance

North America's first comprehensive and catalytic agrivoltaics conference will convene hundreds of attendees in the continent's heartland for two plus difference-making days of instructive, illuminating and inspiring solar power and agriculture production programming when the [2023 Solar Farm Summit](#) descends upon the renowned Hilton Rosemont/Chicago O'Hare hotel March 14 and 15—*Digital Journal*, Dec. 8, 2022: <https://www.digitaljournal.com/pr/inaugural-north-american-agrivoltaics-conference-seeks-to-ignite-dual-use-solar-renaissance>

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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