January 5, 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.wsu.edu/solarnewsbriefs.aspx

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Oregon News

Microsoft, Nike and Common Energy partner on Community Solar in Oregon

Microsoft, Nike and Common Energy partnered on the Skyward Community Solar project, Standard Solar's first community solar project in Oregon. Skyward Solar is a 2.5 MWac photovoltaic solar facility located on 12 acres. The facility is now fully operational and 100 percent subscribed. It consists of modules on a fixed-tilt solar racking system, supported by stationary piles. The clean energy will be fed into the Portland General Electric grid, thus benefiting the entire community—Anne Fischer, *pv magazine*, Dec. 13, 2022: https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2022/12/13/microsoft-nike-and-common-energy-partner-on-skyward-community-solar-in-oregon/

Another Solar Power Station in the works in Umatilla County

Umatilla County could get a new solar power-generating site on exclusive farm use land near Hermiston and Stanfield. EE West End Solar, LLC., a subsidiary of Eurus Solar Holdings LLC, is looking to build a 50-99 megawatt solar power generating facility, including a 70 megawatt lithium ion energy storage system, on 324 acres approximately one mile east of Hermiston and one mile north of Stanfield—*East Oregonian*, Dec. 13, 2022: https://www.eastoregonian.com/news/local/another-solar-power-station-in-works-in-umatilla-county/article_ebee67f8-7a38-11ed-a9d9-b795c178a8c0.html

Central Oregon Solar Project could become one of the state's largest

Northern Lake County is a patchwork of farms and a couple of small communities roughly 50 miles southeast of La Pine. Within a couple of years, it could also be home to Oregon's largest solar power plant. The 400-megawatt Obsidian Solar Center, to be built by Lake Oswego-based Obsidian Renewables LLC, is still in the blueprint stage but when complete could produce a considerable chunk of the state's utility-scale solar power, which currently has a nameplate capacity of 726 megawatts—Michael Kohn, *East Oregonian*, Dec. 16, 2022: https://www.eastoregonian.com/news/state/central-

oregon-solar-project-could-become-one-of-the-states-largest/article_abad5de7-d91b-5675-830c-8c4b15c848cd.html

BLM plans to update Solar Development Rules

The Bureau of Land Management is now accepting comments on proposed amendments to its resource management plan for utility-scale solar projects across the western United States, including Oregon. The Agency will be collecting comments through Feb. 6, 2023 and will hold two virtual public meetings and 12 in-person meetings. The BLM is proposing updates to its Western Solar Plan of 2012 to incorporate new information about solar farm technology and siting. The Western Solar Plan guides decisions made by the BLM regarding the permitting of solar energy developments on BLM land. Currently, the Western Solar Plan only applies to California, Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico and Utah; under the current proposal all 11 western states would be included as potential locations for solar energy development—Kevin Winter, *Lake County Examiner*, Dec. 19, 2022: https://www.lakecountyexam.com/townnews/welfare/blm-plans-to-update-solar-development-rules/article_6771c64a-7fed-11ed-b244-d77c8a4b5759.html

Expanding solar+storage in Oregon

The Oregon Solar+Storage Rebate Program offers rebates to residential customers and low-income service providers who install solar or solar paired with energy storage. Rebates are issued to customers through the Oregon Department of Energy's approved contractors, who pass the full amount of the rebate on as savings to their customers. Homeowners are eligible for rebates for solar-alone systems as well as solar paired with battery storage—Samantha Donalds, *Renewable Energy World*, Dec. 21, 2022: https://www.renewableenergyworld.com/solar/expanding-solarstorage-in-oregon/

SOU gets $2M in Congressional Funds for Campus Solar Arrays

Southern Oregon University cheered Congress Tuesday for securing $2 million to pay for additional solar arrays on campus. The funds — made possible through a $1.7 billion federal appropriations bill that cleared Congress last week — would go toward SOU's eventual goal of becoming the first energy-independent university in the country—Kevin Opsahl, *Mail Tribune*, Dec. 28, 2022: https://www.mailtribune.com/education/2022/12/28/sou-applauds-2m-in-congressional-funds-for-campus-solar-arrays/

Oregon Department of Energy announces New Round of $12 Million in Grant Funding for Renewable Energy and Resilience Projects

The Oregon Department of Energy is now accepting applications for the second round of funding through the agency's Community Renewable Energy Grant Program. ODOE is 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. Applications are due February 15, 2023. For more information see—Oregon Department of Energy [Press Release] Jan. 3, 2023: https://energyinfo.oregon.gov/blog/2023/1/3/oregon-department-of-energy-announces-new-round-of-12-million-in-grant-funding-for-renewable-energy-and-energy-resilience-projects

Washington News

The WSU Energy Program approves First [Community Solar] Project Application

The Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program is excited to announce that it has pre-certified the Community Roots Collaborative (C-ROOTS) low-income community solar project, O Street Roots, and is reserving incentive funds to be paid upon satisfactory completion of their project. Chris Thobaben, acting Executive Director for the O Street Roots project, added, "when we look at housing for people who need it, we don't think just in terms of the up-front costs, but the costs over 40 to 50 years for a person or small family to live. The solar system being installed here will pay for itself in 12-15 years directly benefitting our residents' effort to live healthy lives while taking care of their fellow community members—WSU Energy Program [website], Nov. 2, 2022: https://www.energy.wsu.edu/RenewableEnergy/CommunitySolarProgram.aspx

Child Care Action Council Completes Solar Project with Grant Funding from Puget Sound Energy

Puget Sound Energy is committed to supporting organizations that serve families and individuals in our communities. In this round, the company, through its Green Power and Solar Choice programs, has awarded over $900,000 in total grant funding to local organizations in its electric service area to install new solar projects—Submitted by Child Care Action Council, *Thurston Talk*, Dec. 1, 2022: https://www.thurstontalk.com/2022/12/01/child-care-action-council-completes-solar-project-with-grant-funding-from-puget-sound-energy/

Indigenous Tribes in U.S. will get $75 Million for Climate Relocation

Three Native American tribes who face major climate threats are the first recipients of money from a new federal program designed to help move tribal homes and vital buildings and facilities out of areas threatened by flooding, erosion and other hazards. Two tribes in Alaska and one in Washington state are each getting $25 million to help their ongoing efforts to relocate homes, schools, airports, water-supply wells and other infrastructure, the Biden administration announced—Thomas Frank, *Scientific American*, Dec. 2, 2022: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/indigenous-tribes-in-u-s-will-get-75-million-for-climate-relocation/?eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=44444444-4444-4444-4444-444444444444&eType=EmailBlastContent&eId=1f09bf18-cd24-4105-b9f0-8a9946e3911a

Yakima County Solar Moratorium Eclipsed by State Council

The Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council brushed aside Yakima County's moratorium on solar projects. The council will continue to fast track a California company's application to build side-by-side solar plants on about 1,700 acres zoned for agriculture. The council doesn't have a "mechanism" to stop the review "in light of a county-enacted moratorium," director of siting Ami Hafkemeyer told county commissioners in a letter—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Dec. 6, 2022: https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/yakima-county-solar-moratorium-eclipsed-by-state-council/article_1de9a3fa-7591-11ed-9593-af0ab3e4fafd.html?utm_source=capitalpress.com&utm_campaign=%2Fsearch%2Fsavedsearch%2Fexecute%2F%3Fd1%3Dyesterday%25209am%26d2%3Dtoday%25209am%26xd%3D1%26a%3D3e082132-d88f-11e8-bead-f7dd0e2fcfb2%26s%3Dstart-time%26sd%3Ddesc%26title%3DDon%2520Jenkins%2520notification&utm_medium=followed%20notification%20email&utm_content=read%20more

Inslee Pushes for funding to make WSU Tri-Cities Clean Energy Hub in Washington
WSU Tri-Cities could become the home to a new clean energy institute, if a proposal by Gov. Jay Inslee makes it through the Legislature next year. Inslee previewed his climate agenda for the 2023 legislative session at an event in the Tri-Cities, including a proposal to make WSU's Tri-Cities campus the home of a new Northwest Energy Futures institute. Inslee is asking the Legislature for $10 million to fund it—Laurel Demkovich, *The Spokesman Review*, Dec. 12, 2022:
https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2022/dec/12/inslee-pushes-for-funding-to-make-wsu-tri-cities-c/

Inslee to propose 'New Ways' to site Energy Projects
Washington Gov. Jay Inslee, outlining his climate agenda for the 2023 legislative session, said Dec. 12 that he will propose "new ways" to push through energy-related projects more rapidly. Inslee to propose 'new ways' to site energy projects. "We have a siting system that was built for the last century. We need one that's built for this century," said Inslee, speaking on the WSU Tri-Cities campus in Richland—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Dec. 13, 2022:
https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/inslee-to-propose-new-ways-to-site-energy-projects/article_703489e0-7a78-11ed-8ab6-131d0ac39615.html?utm_source=capitalpress.com&utm_campaign=%2Fsearch%2Fsavedsearch%2Fexecute%2F%3Fd1%3Dyesterday%25209am%26d2%3Dtoday%25209am%26xd%3D1%26a%3D3e082132-d88f-11e8-bead-f7dd0e2fcfb2%26s%3Dstart-time%26sd%3Ddesc%26title%3DDon%2520Jenkins%2520notification&utm_medium=followed%20notification%20email&utm_content=headline

U.S. Dept. of Agriculture Invests Thousands in Yakima County Clean Energy
The U.S. Department of Agriculture is investing $568,938 in clean energy for rural areas in Washington state through the Rural Energy for America Program, according to a press release from the USDA. The funding is spread across ten investments, four in the region [Yakima County]. The remaining six projects are in Lewis County, Mason County, Thurston County, San Juan County and Jefferson County—Karlee Van De Venter, *NonStop Local*, Dec. 15, 2022: https://www.nbcrightnow.com/news/u-s-dept-of-agriculture-invests-thousands-in-yakima-county-clean-energy/article_5c97592a-7d0d-11ed-a4b5-17948a3f0d4d.html?utm_medium=email

Massive Proposed Central Washington Wind Farm a Step Closer to Construction
A large wind farm planned in Benton County has taken a step forward as the state's Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council issued a draft environmental statement for the proposal. The project would authorize as many as 244 turbine locations and two solar arrays on a 72,428-acre site approximately four miles southwest of Kennewick, according to the EFSEC project website. It would have an energy generating capacity of up to 1,150 megawatts—Joel Donofrio, *Yakima Herald-Republic*, Dec. 21, 2022:
https://www.yakimaherald.com/news/local/lower_valley/massive-proposed-central-washington-wind-farm-a-step-closer-to-construction/article_5fbd51fe-8087-11ed-890c-f7028eea1446.html?utm_medium=email

These Rules Could Improve Views of an Eastern WA Wind, Solar Project. What Are Your Thoughts?
A state council is proposing ways to minimize the view of hundreds of soaring towers and spinning turbine blades from a massive wind and solar energy farm planned south of the Tri-Cities. This week,

the Washington state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council released a voluminous draft environmental study for the project. The draft study is posted at efsec.wa.gov under the Horse Heaven Wind Project section. The public has until Feb. 1 to submit comments on the environmental impact statement—Annette Cary, *The News Tribune*, Dec. 22, 2022: https://www.thenewstribune.com/news/state/washington/article270182932.html#storylink=cpy

Report: Horse Heaven Energy Project Impact on Farming 'Low'
The Horse Heaven energy project in southeast Washington will have a "low" impact on agriculture, even though windmills and solar panels would take about 6,800 acres of farmland, according to a draft environmental impact statement. Scout Clean Energy, based in Colorado and bought recently by a Canadian investment firm for $1 billion, proposes to build solar arrays, battery storage areas and up to 244 windmills on the Columbia Plateau four miles south of Kennewick—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Dec. 27, 2022: https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/grains/report-horse-heaven-energy-project-impact-on-farming-low/article_4e98b1f0-8089-11ed-af34-e71371d18ac8.html?block_id=703134&utm_source=newsletter&utm_campaign=top-stories-newsletter&utm_medium=email&utm_content=image

Solar Company asks Inslee Administration to override Rural County's Ban
A Florida company has asked the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council to preempt Benton County's ban on new solar plants and approve a power project on land zoned for agriculture. BrightNight LLC proposes to build the 500-megawatt Hop Hill solar project 11 miles north of Prosser. The company initially sought permits from the county, but was rebuffed—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, Dec. 28, 2022: https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/solar-company-asks-inslee-administration-to-override-rural-countys-ban/article_7cce20c6-86f3-11ed-b045-5f60bf76bba3.html?utm_source=capitalpress.com&utm_campaign=%2Fsearch%2Fsavedsearch%2Fexecute%2F%3Fd1%3Dyesterday%25209am%26d2%3Dtoday%25209am%26xd%3D1%26a%3D3e082132-d88f-11e8-bead-f7dd0e2fcfb2%26s%3Dstart-time%26sd%3Ddesc%26title%3DDon%2520Jenkins%2520notification&utm_medium=followed%20notification%20email&utm_content=headline

National News and Reports

That Empty Space next to Highways? Put Solar Panels on it
On a stretch of West Georgia highway, in the triangle of land where an exit ramp meets the road, 2,600 solar panels soak up the bright southern sun. The 5-acre site used to be barren and eroding, but now it provides enough power for more than 100 homes. That is exactly what the team at the Ray C. Anderson Foundation's sustainable highway project, known as The Ray, was hoping for—Emily Jones, *Grist,* Dec. 7, 2022: https://grist.org/transportation/empty-roadside-land-solar-energy/?utm_medium=email

The Hard Truth of Building Clean Solar Farms
Last month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Department of Justice announced more than a million dollars in penalties against companies for polluting local waterways. The culprits? Four solar farms in Illinois, Alabama, and Idaho. "The development of solar energy is a key component of [the Biden] administration's efforts to combat climate change," said Larry Starfield, an administrator at the Environmental Protection Agency, in a press release on November 14. "These settlements send an

important message to the site owners of solar farm projects that these facilities must be planned and built-in compliance with all environmental laws"—Zayna Syed, *Popular Science*, Dec. 15, 2022: https://www.popsci.com/environment/solar-farm-construction-epa-water-violations/

Community Solar

For Energy Transition Equity, Communities must run Community Solar

In 2021, the median income of a rooftop solar adapter was $110,000 a year. That same year, the U.S. median income was $63,000. The gap is closing — in 2010, the median rooftop solar adapter made $138,000 compared to just under $50,000 for the median American — but it's not closing fast enough to get enough solar to the people who need it most. In the report Community-Owned Community Solar: Opportunities and Challenges, written with the Environmental Law Policy Center, ownership models, methods for distributing benefits, barriers, and resources for community organizations and policymakers interested in pursuing or advocating for community-owned community solar are laid out—Eric Sippert, *Utility Drive*, Dec. 19, 2022: https://www.utilitydive.com/news/for-energy-transition-equity-communities-must-run-community-solar/639039/?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Issue:%202022-12-19%20Utility%20Dive%20Newsletter%20%5Bissue:46806%5D&utm_term=Utility%20Dive

Agrivoltaics

Emerging Technology allows Solar Panels and Agriculture to Coexist, Legal Hurdles remain

Renewable energy technologies such as wind turbines and solar panels are gaining traction, but are sometimes met with local resistance because they take up valuable space that could otherwise be used for agricultural production. Agrivoltaics provides a way of creating dual land usage, combining solar panels with crops or grazing animals in the same field. A new study from the College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences (ACES) at the University of Illinois presents an overview of zoning and taxation regulations that affect agrivoltaics across the United States, identifying challenges and possible solutions—Marianne Stein, *University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign*, *ACES News*, Dec. 1, 2022: https://aces.illinois.edu/news/emerging-technology-allows-solar-panels-and-agriculture-coexist-legal-hurdles-remain

U.S. Government Allocates $8 Million to support Agrivoltaics

The U.S. Department of Energy has announced the Foundational Agrivoltaic Research for Megawatt Scale (FARMS) funding, which has allocated $8 million for six solar energy research projects across six states and the District of Columbia. The projects are intended to provide new economic opportunities for farmers, rural communities, and the solar industry—Anne Fischer, *pv magazine*, Dec. 15, 2022: https://www.pv-magazine.com/2022/12/15/us-government-allocates-8-million-to-support-agrivoltaics/

A Solar Project to restore Prairie and Pollinators

California prairie once proliferated across the Central Valley before it was converted to cropland. A new project involving solar power, pollinators, native plants, Native people, and even a salamander is shaping ways to help restore the ecosystem while also advancing clean energy. EPRI and the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD) launched the collaborative project this week to test the restoration of pollinator habitat on 20 acres of a decommissioned nuclear generating station near

Sacramento—Kat Kerlin, *UC Davis News*, Dec. 15, 2022: https://www.ucdavis.edu/climate/news/solar-project-restore-prairie-and-pollinators

Fire Safety Guide for Rooftop Solar Installers
Almost half of U.S. states have now adopted the 2020 National Electrical Code, which includes specific fire safety requirements for rooftop solar projects. If a fire should break out at a home or commercial building, the code ensures firefighters will not be harmed by an energized solar array on the rooftop. Installers now have multiple options to satisfy this measure in the code, including the use of module-level rapid shutdown devices and PV Hazard Control systems — listed as UL 3741—Kelsey Misbrener, *Solar Power World*, Dec. 28, 2022: https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2022/12/fire-safety-guide-for-rooftop-solar-installers/

Conferences and Events

2023 National Community Solar Partnership Annual Summit: Community Solar's Time to Shine
January 19, 2023: San Diego, CA and Virtual
It is community solar's time to shine. Mark your calendars for the third annual NCSP Summit to be held on January 19, 2023, in San Diego, CA and virtually. Join the partnership to stay up to date on the summit details, NCSP announcements, and other community solar news. Registration link forthcoming. For more information and to register: https://www.energy.gov/communitysolar/2023-national-community-solar-partnership-annual-summit

Bringing Community Perspectives to Community Solar: January 23, 11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m. PST
As part of their effort to ensure that community solar implementation can serve all communities, Solstice Initiative has been pioneering research into contracts to gain perspective on how the public views community solar product offerings. In this webinar, hosted by the Clean Energy States Alliance, representatives from Solstice Initiative will present their research findings with commentary from Energy Outreach Colorado and Loyola University Chicago, and NYC Environmental Justice Alliance—Clean Energy Group. For more information and to register:
https://www.cleanegroup.org/webinar/bringing-community-perspectives-to-community-solar/

Least-Conflict Solar Siting on the Columbia Plateau: Gathering #2 January 18, 2023
Individual mapping groups will present their progress toward creating least-conflict maps, and participants will have the opportunity to share feedback on the criteria being used to inform the maps. Learn about transmission issues and Tribal considerations, and hear about the most current information on legislative action in the State of Washington affecting solar and renewable siting in the Columbia Plateau region and elsewhere. For more information and to register see the WSU Energy Program Least-Conflict Solar Siting website:
https://www.energy.wsu.edu/RenewableEnergy/LeastConflictSolar.aspx

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 difference-making days of instructive, illuminating and inspiring solar power + 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

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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

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