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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

Update on Oregon Community Solar Bill Credit Rates

Oregon Community Solar Stakeholders, on February 23, 2021, the Oregon Public Utility Commission (OPUC) adopted Staff's recommendation to extend the 2020 Community Solar Program bill credit rates in PGE, Pacific Power and Idaho Power territories. The 2020 bill credit rates will be in effect for projects that are pre-certified within the remainder of the interim capacity tier or until January 31, 2022. The release of new program capacity will be subject to new bill credit rate—Oregon Community Solar Program, Feb. 26, 2021: <https://www.oregoncsp.org/p/News>

Big News – OSEIA is now OSSIA

OSEIA held its annual member meeting on February 19 and the membership voted to change its name from the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association to the Oregon Solar + Storage Industries Association. This reflects the growing role that storage plays in clean energy independence and the increase in demand for storage from customers. OSSIA, still pronounced oh – see – ahh, has been advocating for storage for years — in the state solar + storage rebate, in the Green Energy Technology requirement, and in the public purpose charge — that it does not really change the current work. The new name more accurately reflects the work and membership—OSSIA, Feb. 23, 2021:

<https://cascadebusnews.com/big-news-oseia-is-now-ossia/>

Intel Taps Oregon Solar Through PGE's Green Future Impact Program

[Portland General Electric](#) (PGE) says Intel has joined PGE's [Green Future Impact program](#). Intel's participation enabled PGE to enter into a 15-year agreement with [Avangrid Renewables](#), a subsidiary of AVANGRID Inc., to purchase emissions-free energy from a new 138 MW solar facility that will be developed in Wasco County, Ore. Intel's purchase is the single largest in PGE's program; the company

joins 17 other businesses and municipalities that have committed to purchase clean power through the Green Future Impact program, filling the program's original 300 MW capacity. Intel signed a 15-year agreement with PGE to enable the development of the new Daybreak Solar facility—Michael Bates, *Solar Industry*, Feb. 12, 2021: <https://solarindustrymag.com/intel-taps-oregon-solar-through-pges-green-future-impact-program>

Pine Gate Renewables Pledges to Plant Two Trees for Every One Removed From New Solar Sites

Pine Gate Renewables and the Arbor Day Foundation announced a new partnership to replant trees impacted as a result of solar project development. Starting in 2021, Pine Gate will plant two trees for every one that is removed from their sites during new project construction. In Oregon, Pine Gate is planting 5,000 trees along the Columbia River Basin. The work in Oregon is a multi-year project to undo the effects of deforestation and industrialization on the Columbia and Willamette Rivers. The trees in Oregon will improve water quality, restore wildlife habitats and support recreation and watershed health. The end goal is to improve the riparian ecosystem that promotes abundant salmon runs and counteracts the decline of the salmon population in the Pacific Northwest. Pine Gate has 16 operational solar projects across the state and 21 in development—Kelsey Misbrener, Feb. 17, 2021, *Solar Power World*, Feb. 17, 2021: <https://www.solarpowerworldonline.com/2021/02/pine-gate-renewables-arbor-day-foundation-solar-tree-commitment/>

Washington

Lights Out for Bill to Let Washington Counties Nix Solar Panels on Farms

A bill to give counties and cities, rather than an unelected state board, the power to approve or reject solar panel arrays on farmland has failed. Sen. Judy Warnick, R-Moses Lake, said Saturday that she was disappointed. She introduced Senate Bill 5206 to bar the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council from overriding local opposition to solar panels taking over farmland. The bill stemmed from a proposal to build a 235-acre solar project on farmland in Kittitas County, a sunny and agricultural rich region in Central Washington. County commissioners were opposed. Public meetings in the county were well attended and many residents commented, for and against, the project—Don Jenkins, *Capital Press*, March 1, 2021: https://www.capitalpress.com/ag_sectors/rurallife/lights-out-for-bill-to-let-washington-counties-nix-solar-panels-on-farms/article_7c10d8fe-7aac-11eb-8f79-6b7cb068cd88.html

Norwegian Billionaire's Moves Could Lead to Jobs in Moses Lake, Big Role in State Economy

Before he became the second-richest man in Norway, Kjell Inge Røkke got his start in business in Seattle, founding what became American Seafoods in the 1980s and eventually controlling a small conglomerate of companies including Brooks Sports and Helly Hansen. Decades later, he now could again take a key role in the region. The [Columbia Basin Herald](#) reports that Røkke, who runs the Norwegian fishing, construction and engineering company Aker, is pressing to be made chairman of REC Silicon, which has a big, idle plant in Moses Lake. That plant made polysilicon for solar panels and flat-screen displays until U.S.-China trade disputes disrupted the business, costing hundreds of jobs—Rami Grunbaum, *Seattle Times*, Feb. 13, 2021: <https://www.thenewtribune.com/news/article249251055.html>

Commerce Awards \$3.7 Million for Solar Installations Benefitting Low-Income Communities

The Washington State Department of Commerce today announced \$3.7 million in grants for nine solar

energy projects across the state. The projects will result in a total \$6.1 million reduction in the energy burden of low-income households and nonprofits serving low-income communities over 25 years. The Low-Income Solar Deployment Program is part of Washington's Clean Energy Fund, established in 2013. These grants will result in 2.8 megawatts (MW) of nameplate generation from new solar installations — enough solar power to serve about 322 average households per year or over 12 million electric vehicle miles—Washington State Department of Commerce, Feb. 25, 2021:

<https://wastatecommerce.medium.com/commerce-awards-3-7-million-for-solar-installations-benefitting-low-income-communities-bbc06bc62601>

Puget Sound Energy Awards More than \$1 Million in Solar Installation Grants

As an ongoing effort to provide assistance to provide assistance to communities, an effort that is heightened by the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, Puget Sound Energy (PSE) is committed to supporting organizations that serve families and individuals in need. The company, through its Green Power and Solar Choice programs, has awarded more than \$1 million in grant funding to 15 organizations in its service area to install new solar projects—the highest amount distributed through the programs to date. Recipients range from local non-profits, housing authorities and tribal entities serving low-income and Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) community members and projects that further clean energy in the region—Puget Sound Energy, Feb. 25, 2021:

<https://www.thurstontalk.com/2021/02/25/puget-sound-energy-awards-more-than-1-million-in-solar-installation-grants/>

Local Groups Earn Energy Grants for Solar Panels

Puget Sound Energy has announced \$1 million in grants to help organizations upgrade to solar power — and several Skagit County organizations are among those that will benefit. Boys & Girls Clubs of Skagit County, Helping Hands Solutions Center, Camp Korey and Friendship House are among the 15 announced recipients. Ron McHenry, CEO and president of Boys & Girls Clubs of Skagit County, said solar panels on the Sedro-Woolley clubhouse will allow the organization to save on bills and spend the money elsewhere—Trevor Pyle, GoSkagit, Feb. 26, 2021:

https://www.goskagit.com/news/local_news/local-groups-earn-energy-grants-for-solar-panels/article_24f7c19d-05c8-5dbc-8bf4-63bd5b185888.html

Evergreen Options Grant Program 2020 Recipient

Shiloh Baptist Church has served as an anchor institution in the Black/African American community since 1953. Shiloh's pastor and congregation have played an important role in organizing campaigns for climate justice and the NAACP, and Shiloh Baptist Church is a critical resource to many in need. The \$50,000 Evergreen Options grant will enable Shiloh Baptist to construct a 19.78 kilowatt solar photovoltaic installation, in turn creating an opportunity to showcase grassroots solutions to the impacts of climate change, while investing in facilities that are the backbone of our community—Tacoma Public Utilities, Evergreen Options Grant Program, 2020 Recipient:

<https://www.mytpu.org/community-environment/clean-renewable-energy/evergreen-options-program/evergreen-options-grant-program/>

Washington State Cooperative Installs First of Many Microgrids Planned for Islands

Orcas Power & Light Cooperative (OPALCO) has set up a 500-kW solar microgrid on Decatur Island, one

of several island microgrids planned for the San Juan Islands, off the north coast of Washington. Foster Hildreth, OPALCO general manager, said Feb. 24 during a presentation on the project that he considers this the first of many to help maintain power reliability as they transition away from carbon based fuels. The Decatur Island microgrid, which started operating in February, includes a 1-MW, 2.6-MWh lithium iron phosphate battery storage system that can supply the island's 500 homes with power for about four hours. The batteries are next to a community solar project, which started operating in 2018—Ethan Howland, *Microgrid Knowledge*, Feb. 26, 2021: <https://microgridknowledge.com/decatur-washington-island-microgrids/>

Northside Landfill Eyed for Solar Development

The city of Spokane could soon transform part of a former environmental wasteland into a solar energy generator. City officials will consider soliciting a solar energy company to build an array of photovoltaic panels at the Northside Landfill, an expansive 345-acre parcel on Indian Trail Road that was only recently lifted off the Environmental Protection Agency's priority list of Superfund cleanup sites. After more than 30 years of rehabilitation, the solar project could mark the start of a gradual evolution of a polluted landfill into a blend of transportation, recreation and energy production infrastructure—Adam Shanks, *The Spokesman-Review*, Feb. 25, 2021:

<https://www.spokesman.com/stories/2021/feb/25/northside-landfill-eyed-for-solar-development/>

Agrivoltaics

The Weekend Read: Solar's Flexibility can be Agriculture's Gain

Both solar and the farming industry are beginning to see potential in the combined use of land for food production and energy generation. And as innovators begin to experiment with different forms, it is becoming clear that in most cases it is solar that will have to bend to the needs of agriculture, and not the other way around, to ensure a positive outcome. The combination of PV and agriculture could have benefits for both industries, while also cutting down on land use. Researchers are working to ensure that projects and systems are designed in ways that offer positive outcomes for both sides—Mark Hutchins, *PV Magazine*, Feb. 20, 2021: <https://www.pv-magazine.com/2021/02/20/the-weekend-read-solars-flexibility-can-be-agricultures-gain/>

State of the Art

More & Faster Solar Panel Installations in the USA: There is an App for That

President Joe Biden has penned an ambitious plan for climate action, but the devil is in the details. One of those details is the sea of red tape that lies between a rooftop and a set of spanking new solar panels, in the form of local zoning and permitting regulations. The wheels of bureaucracy can slow things down to a crawl, and that costs money and jobs. Now the U.S. Department of Energy is here with something called the new SolarAPP, aimed at revving the solar permitting process up to warp speed.

Tina Casey, *Clean Technica*, Feb. 17, 2021: <https://cleantechnica.com/2021/02/17/more-faster-solar-panel-installations-in-the-usa-theres-an-app-for-that/>

Upcoming Virtual Conferences and Presentations

Solar Washington Presentation: Explaining the Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience (C-PACER) Program: Thursday, March 18, 2021 at 12:00 p.m.

Justifying the up-front cost of a new solar install is often difficult. Fortunately, the state of Washington has now enabled a new form of financing that allows commercial property owners to spread the cost over a long time horizon, effectively letting the energy savings service the expense. Known as Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy and Resilience (C-PACER), this financing may be the difference between a solar dream and panels on the roof of your business. For more information and to register:

https://www.solarwa.org/march_2021_solar_washington_presentation_explaining_the_commercial_property_assessed_clean_energy_and_resilience_program

Solar Washington Presentation: Solar Financing 101: Thursday, April 8, 2021 12:00 p.m.

Solar Financing 101. You are ready, your roof is ready, the sun is out and the tax holding you credit is waiting! If trying to figure out how to pay for it is a hurdle this presentation is for you. Learn more about your options when it comes to paying for your solar system including why no interest may not always be the best option. For more information and to register see:

https://www.solarwa.org/april_2021_solar_washington_presentation_solar_financing_101

GoGreen Virtual Annual Conference: Tuesday April 6, 2021

For more than a decade, the GoGreen Conference has been an action driving sustainability learning experience for community leaders, business and public sector decision-makers in the Pacific Northwest. Featuring regionally focused content and recognized leaders from communities, GoGreen works across industry silos to foster peer-to-peer learning and collaborative solutions. GoGreen believes sustainability in the business setting is a powerful and indispensable tool for navigating the tumultuous waters of today's global economy and solving our climate woes. For more information and to register see: <https://www.seattle.gogreenconference.net/>

Collaborating with Community-Based Organizations: An Energy Justice Primer for States: Tuesday, March 23, 2021 11:00 p.m. PDT

Partnerships between state energy agencies and community-based organizations (CBOs) are a key component of advancing energy justice. Solar development in under-resourced communities will be most effective and equitable when trusted community organizations are involved. Community engagement can lead to innovative, equitable, and inclusive solar projects by connecting the concerns of communities to the decisions that allocate public funds. The Clean Energy States Alliance (CESA) together with the Rhode Island Office of Energy Resources (OER) has authored a new guide for states on collaborating with CBOs. The guide covers the preliminary steps and training state agencies can undertake prior to pursuing collaboration with CBOs, how to structure community engagement, and how to build long-term, mutually beneficial partnerships. Case studies highlight successful state/CBO collaborations: See the Clean Energy States Alliance for more info, access guide, and registration:

<https://www.cesa.org/event/collaborating-with-community-based-organizations/>

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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