



**October 1, 2020**

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**

### **Blue Sky Grant Aids YMCA Solar Panel Project**

A 134-kilowatt solar array installed in May with a \$125,000 grant from Pacific Power's Blue Sky program at the Mid-Willamette Family YMCA is already saving money for the nonprofit organization, lowering energy costs by more than 10% percent per month. According to YMCA Executive Director Chris Reese, the nonprofit organization has saved nearly \$5,000 in energy costs, the equivalent of the annual energy consumption of more than six U.S. homes—Alex Paul, *Lebanon Express*, Sept. 5, 2020: [https://lebanon-express.com/news/blue-sky-grant-aids-ymca-solar-panel-project/article\\_ee6d99c6-1c78-5f7e-b793-3eff3fd0f704.html](https://lebanon-express.com/news/blue-sky-grant-aids-ymca-solar-panel-project/article_ee6d99c6-1c78-5f7e-b793-3eff3fd0f704.html)

### **USDA Invests \$8.7 Million in Energy in Rural Oregon**

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Development is investing \$8.7 million to help 75 agricultural producers and small businesses in rural Oregon lower their energy costs through renewable energy adoption and energy efficiency improvements, announced State Director John Huffman on Tuesday—U.S. Department of Agriculture, *Argus Observer*, Sept. 9, 2020:

[https://www.argusobserver.com/valley\\_life/usda-invests-8-7-million-in-energy-in-rural-oregon/article\\_e2f7ac-f215-11ea-ae9-e7e27cae1fdd.html](https://www.argusobserver.com/valley_life/usda-invests-8-7-million-in-energy-in-rural-oregon/article_e2f7ac-f215-11ea-ae9-e7e27cae1fdd.html)

### **Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund Seeks Proposals for \$8.6 Million in First Round of Funding for Community Projects**

Today, the Portland Clean Energy Community Benefits Fund (PCEF) released its inaugural request for proposals (RFP) for \$8.6 million of funding for green jobs, healthy homes, and community energy. This

RFP is the product of many months of hard work by the PCEF Grant Committee, PCEF staff, BPS staff, the Mayor's office and hundreds of community members who provided thoughtful input along the way. The fund is the result of a local 2018 ballot initiative led by thousands of community projects that focus on frontline communities. The City of Portland and the PCEF team welcome the community's best ideas for addressing climate change and advancing racial and social justice. For more information and to apply see the City of Portland Press Release from Sept. 22, 2020:

<https://www.portland.gov/bps/cleanenergy/news/2020/9/16/portland-clean-energy-community-benefits-fund-seeks-proposals-86>

### **Fleet Development Plans New Solar Project in Wallowa County**

Ryan Sheehy's Fleet Development moved a step closer to its second Wallowa County community solar project in August when the county commissioners tacitly approved leasing property for the facility, pending a review of contracts. Fleet Development is seeking to transform an unused corner of the county's former asphalt plant site on Fish Hatchery Lane and Homan Lane into a solar power farm that would provide energy to local customers through Pacific Power's grid—*The Observer*. Sept. 3, 2020:

[https://www.lagrandeobserver.com/business/fleet-development-plans-new-solar-project-in-wallowa-county/article\\_adce560c-ec89-11ea-bd90-43aa81fb65bc.html](https://www.lagrandeobserver.com/business/fleet-development-plans-new-solar-project-in-wallowa-county/article_adce560c-ec89-11ea-bd90-43aa81fb65bc.html)

### **Oregon's Coal-Free Future: Where will Power Come From?**

Every day, electricity crackles across power lines hanging over the sparsely populated counties of Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam and Sherman that border the Columbia River. With the ongoing global climate crisis, the debate about how this electricity can be produced by cleaner, renewable energy continues to heat up. Nowhere is this more obvious than with the case of Portland General Electric's attempts to shift away from coal-generated electricity. As the state's last coal-fired plant closes in Morrow County by the end of 2020, utilities are facing a complex road ahead to close the gap between renewable and non-renewable generation—Nick Rosenberger, *The Bend Bulletin*, Sept. 20, 2020:

[https://www.bendbulletin.com/climate\\_changed/oregons-coal-free-future-where-will-power-come-from/article\\_6b9037b4-eeec-11ea-b9f3-033039ed261b.html](https://www.bendbulletin.com/climate_changed/oregons-coal-free-future-where-will-power-come-from/article_6b9037b4-eeec-11ea-b9f3-033039ed261b.html)

### **Violet Power Plans Only Vertically Integrated Crystalline Solar Factory in U.S.**

Violet Power, an Oregon-based solar startup helmed by the recently retired director of the Department of Energy's solar office, plans to build a fully integrated manufacturing plant in Washington state. After ramping through 2021, the Violet factory will be ready to roll out between 300 and 500 megawatts' worth of solar cells per year. Over time, the company plans to add modules and then wafers, making it the only U.S. crystalline silicon solar plant producing all of those parts of the supply chain—Emma Foehringer Merchant, *gtm*, Sept. 9, 2020: <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/solar-startup-violet-power-plans-wafer-cells-and-module-factory-in-washington>

## **Washington News**

### **PSE Solar Grants Make a Difference with Whatcom County Non-Profits**

Fortunately, four Whatcom County non-profits recently received sizeable grants from Puget Sound Energy for installing solar panels on their offices or other essential structures. Kulshan Community Land Trust, Lummi Nation Housing Authority, Lydia Place and Opportunity Council were four of this year's 10 grant recipients for the program, which is in its third year and has provided more than \$1.3 million to

non-profits across PSE's Washington service map—by Matt Benoit, *Whatcom Talk*, Sept. 22, 2020: <https://www.whatcomtalk.com/2020/09/21/pse-solar-grants-make-a-difference-with-whatcom-county-non-profits/>

### **PSE Awards Organizations Funding for New Solar Installations**

As the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted families throughout Washington, local organizations that have been helping them will receive support from Puget Sound Energy. PSE will grant nearly \$580,000 to 10 organizations throughout its service area for new solar installations which will total 235 kW of new installed solar enough to power/or save nearly 240,000 kWh. This will help local organizations by reducing its operating costs while also helping the environment by producing green power—Northern *Kittitas County Tribune*, Aug. 27, 2020: <https://nkctribune.com/pse-awards-organizations-funding-for-new-solar-installations/>

### **Edwin Wanji Brings Solar Energy to South Seattle — and Rural Kenya**

When two men met long ago as part of a city committee, they did not know that years later it would lead to a solar installation. Dennis Comer, who lives near Genesee Park, works as the director of the nonprofit [Central Area Collaborative](#). His days are spent trying to promote investments and development that will benefit the Central District and preserve its cultural legacy. Edwin Wanji is the owner of [Sphere Solar Energy](#), a five-year-old company that installs solar panels on roofs in Washington as well as around the world. Sally James, *South Seattle Emerald*, Sept. 24, 2020: <https://southseattleemerald.com/2020/09/24/edwin-ngangi-wanji-brings-solar-energy-to-south-seattle-and-rural-kenya/>

### **Installation of Solar Panels to Save City \$10,000 a Year**

The City of Pullman finished the installment of solar panels for the new City Hall and Parks, Facilities and Recreation building in downtown. Kevin Gardes, City of Pullman public works director, said there has been a discussion of installing solar panels but the city needed to find a suitable site to install them. The solar panels will help offset the electricity use and cost at the new City Hall and Parks, Facilities and Recreation building, he said.—Andrea Gonzalez, *Daily Evergreen*, Aug. 25, 2020: <https://dailyevergreen.com/84435/news/installment-of-solar-panels-to-save-city-10000-a-year/#:~:text=Pullman%20City%20Hall%20now%20has,for%20more%20than%2030%20years.&text=The%20City%20of%20Pullman%20finished,and%20Recreation%20building%20in%20downtown.>

## **Solar Industry**

### **How the Coronavirus Pandemic Has Impacted U.S. Solar So Far**

Since the coronavirus pandemic began shutting down cities and states, the U.S. solar industry has had to cope with a new normal. Though it has only been a few (very, very long) months, solar developers, financiers and installers have pivoted to new ways of selling and funding projects. With an end to the pandemic nowhere in sight, those changes look to be enduring. Some have even benefited the industry—Emma Foehringer Merchant, *gtm*, Sept. 28, 2020: <https://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/how-the-coronavirus-pandemic-has-already-reshaped-u.s-solar>

### **Hiring for Solar Jobs During a pandemic**

In spite of industry-wide job loss and economic slowdown associated with the pandemic, Kevin Gillespie, president of Headline Solar, shares how he has actually been able to make new hires and keep his business not just operating, but thriving—Kevin Gillespie, *pV magazine*, Sept. 28, 2020:

<https://www.pv-magazine.com/2020/09/28/hiring-for-solar-jobs-during-a-pandemic/>

### **Solar Market Insight Report 2020 Q3**

The quarterly SEIA/Wood Mackenzie Power & Renewables U.S. Solar Market Insight™ report shows the major trends in the U.S. solar industry. For Q3, the report notes that utility scale remains resilient and residential and non-residential segments saw a significant slowdown. For more information, the

press release and to access the full report, see SEIA, Sept. 10, 2020: <https://www.seia.org/research-resources/solar-market-insight-report-2020-q3>

### **Game changer: Violet Power to Offer 50-Year Solar Panel Warranty with U.S.-Made IBC Technology**

**Coming** out of stealth-mode, U.S.-based integrated PV panel manufacturing start-up, Violet Power intends to disrupt the PV industry with in-house production of high-efficiency IBC (Interdigitated Back Contact) solar cells. The company will use cell-to-module ‘flex circuit’ and thermal plastic encapsulant technology in a glass/glass configuration that will have a solar panel warranty of 50 years, more than three times the average in the industry, today—Mark Osborne, *PV Tech*, Sept. 8, 2020: <https://www.pv-tech.org/news/game-changer-violet-power-to-offer-50-year-solar-panel-warranty-with-us-made-ibc-technology>

### **Solar Panels Generate Mountains of Waste — and Heat the Planet**

The problem of solar panel waste is now becoming evident. As environmental journalist, Emily Folk admits in *Renewable Energy Magazine*, “when talking about renewable energy, the topic of waste does not often appear.” She attributes this to the supposed “pressures of climate change” and alleged “urgency to find alternative energy sources,” saying people may thus be hesitant to discuss “possible negative impacts of renewable energy.”—Duggan Flanakin, *CFACT*, Sept. 18, 2020:

[https://www.cfact.org/2020/09/18/solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet/?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet?utm\\_source=rss&utm\\_medium=rss&utm\\_campaign=solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet](https://www.cfact.org/2020/09/18/solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=solar-panels-generate-mountains-of-waste-and-heat-the-planet)

### **Upcoming Conferences, Webinars, etc.**

**2020 *Virtual* Washington State Solar Summit, Friday October 16, 2020 8:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.**

Each year the Solar Summit is an important annual information gathering and networking event for industry stakeholders **including manufacturers, installers, utilities, municipalities, legislators/policy makers, educators, students, tribal members, advocacy organizations/nonprofits, distributors, engineers, financial lenders, consultants and more.** The **Solar Summit** attempts to tackle the timeliest issues and most talked about conversations surrounding solar energy and solar adoption in Washington. Early Bird rates end Oct. 2, 2020. For more information and to register:

[https://www.solarwa.org/2020\\_solar\\_summit](https://www.solarwa.org/2020_solar_summit)

## Oregon Solar Energy Conference is *Virtual*, October 6–8, 2020

In 2019, the Oregon Solar Energy Conference hosted over 500 attendees representing over 220 companies. The conference offered over 20 hours registered for NABCEP CE. Check it out in 2020. To submit session proposals and for further information see: <https://www.oseia.org/osec/>

## Financing Resilient Power in Underserved Communities: Moving Forward with Distributed Solar+Storage Projects Webinar October 20, 2020

Resilient solar PV and battery storage (solar+storage) projects are increasingly being pursued in low- and moderate-income communities in response to a combination of falling costs, new revenue opportunities and incentive programs, and innovative financing solutions. This webinar, hosted by Clean Energy Group and the New York City Energy Efficiency Corporation (NYCEEC), will explore the economics of distributed solar+storage projects, characteristics of current projects, financing solutions, incentives, and technical assistance resources—For more information and to register: <https://www.cesa.org/event/financing-resilient-power-in-underserved-communities/>

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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](mailto:whitneya@energy.wsu.edu)

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