CLEAN ENERGY SITING COUNCIL SUMMARY

Date: August 12, 2026, 1:00 to 4:00 p.m.
Council Co-leads:
Ecology: Joenne McGerr, Diane Butorac, Marissa Smith, Alex Shin, Amelia Fujikawa
Commerce: Stephanie Celt, Dan Siemann, Talia Mirel

Council members: *DAHP:* Allyson Brooks; *DNR:* Zoe Mullendore; *EFSEC:* Lisa McLean, Keith Quinata; *EJ Council:* Jonathan Chen; *GOV:* Kate Brouns;
Guests: *Ecology:* Karl Rains; *EFSEC*: Sean Greene; Lance Caputo; Joanne Snarski; Ami Hafkemeyer; *WDFW:* Megan Kernan and Mike Ritter

Staffing updates

The Council discussed agency staffing updates and bid farewell to Talia Mirel, who will be departing Commerce.

Governor's Executive Order 25-11

Dan Siemann, Commerce, shared an update on the Joint Clean Energy Acceleration Team (JCEAT) and the current wind and solar project list.

Siting and permitting case studies

The Council invited presentations from five agencies highlighting recent clean energy siting and permitting experiences, including common challenges and effective coordination strategies. The case studies illustrated practical lessons about early engagement, interagency communication, and flexible approaches to project review.

JCEAT projects

Dan Siemann, Commerce, discussed the JCEAT's experience in working with projects to provide siting and permitting assistance. Of the six projects that reached out for assistance, most issues arose from pre-construction permits or tax exemption processes rather than siting or major permitting challenges. While projects are complex with many steps, most issues were resolved quickly, with only a few requiring deeper analysis. Developers valued having a single state point of contact to help coordinate across agencies.

Royal Slope – Grant County

Dr. Allyson Brooks, DAHP, reviewed the Royal Slope project, which also was a JCEAT project. The project experienced major delays from a complex federal process, which also caused the county to pause action until federal issues were resolved. State staff facilitated conversations among federal agencies, the county, Tribes, Commerce, and Ecology to clarify the SEPA path forward. A key takeaway was the challenge of aligning state mandates with federally controlled permitting schedules. The discussion emphasized that

complex, multi-agency projects benefit from a trusted third-party facilitator, especially when Tribal concerns are involved.

Local Planning - Grant County

Diane Butorac, Ecology, discussed how local agencies are using planning to be more effective at project-level, specifically the work done by Grant County. The county is managing multiple proposed clean energy and data center projects, prompting community concerns about siting. A long-range planning effort and updated codes have helped establish workable siting and design standards to address concerns around habitat, agricultural land, setbacks, and visual impact. The county's transparency around current projects on their website and early engagement approach have resulted in many projects receiving mitigated determination of non-significance (MDNS) determinations.

SkyNRG, Sustainable Aviation Fuel facility – Walla Walla County

Karl Rains, Ecology, presented about Ecology's experience with SkyNRG during the SEPA process. The project timeline was extended when the location changed during SEPA review to a site with fewer impacts but additional analysis was needed for the new site. Coordination among agencies and outreach efforts emphasized the importance of early pre-application coordination, early outreach, and the use of a third-party facilitator.

Wautoma Solar – Benton County

Sean Greene, EFSEC, presented about the Wautoma Solar project and site certification agreement. The project experienced delays due to limited pre-application work, issues with study methods, and the need for supplemental information, some of which was slowed by winter conditions. Differences between the developer's timeline and agency processes also contributed to scheduling challenges. Key points included the importance of more robust pre-application discussions, clearer guidance on required documentation, regular Tribal coordination, and early review of mitigation language with the developer.

Schnebly Coulee Solar Project – Kittitas County

Megan Kernan and Mike Ritter, WDFW, discussed Schnebly Coulee project's habitat analysis. The project site was chosen under older guidance from WDFW, but the newer guidance highlighted the area as having habitats with high value. The agency worked with developers to avoid the highest value areas and adjusted plans to reduce the overall footprint. Additional efforts included addressing wildlife concerns and identifying mitigation lands. The lessons learned included flexibility in guidance, early communication between the developer and agencies, and including broader mitigation considerations in reporting.

Annual report updates

Talia Mirel, Commerce, provided an update on the Council annual report. The report is currently being reviewed by Commerce and Ecology's co-leads, communications, and senior management teams. The report will be finalized in early October.

Environmental Justice toolkit workgroup update

Amelia Fujikawa, Ecology, provided an update on the Environmental Justice Toolkit for Clean Energy Projects. A draft of the toolkit is scheduled to be published in August with a 30-day comment period and broad outreach. The workgroup is hosting a public Q&A session as well as a Tribal forum in September to gather input for the final toolkit, which will be released in early 2027.

Agency updates

Agencies provided updates on agency clean energy efforts both planned and in progress.

ACTION ITEMS			
Responsible	**Action**	**Start Date**	**Due Date**