

# Low-Carbon Energy Project Siting Advisory Board

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## MEETING SUMMARY, JANUARY 5, 2022

### Advisory Board Members participating:

- Association of Washington Business – Peter Godlewski
- Audubon Society – Adam Maxwell
- Climate Solutions – Kelly Hall
- Front and Centered – Mariel Thuraingham
- Invenergy – Laura Miner
- Klickitat County – Dave McClure
- Makah Tribe – Vice-Chairman Patrick DePoe
- NextEra Energy Resources – Christopher Powers
- Port of Benton – Diahann Howard
- Port of Grays Harbor – Gary Nelson
- Puget Sound Energy Group – Cassie Bordelon
- Puyallup Tribe – Lisa Anderson
- Renewable Energy Group – Kent Hartwig
- Sierra Club – Stephanie Hillman
- Spokane City – Breean Beggs
- Washington Environmental Council – Rebecca Ponzio
- Washington State Association of Counties – Paul Jewell
- Washington State Building and Construction Trades Council – Mark Riker
- Washington State Labor Council – Joe Kendo
- Whatcom County – Amy Keenan

### State Agency Representatives and Facilitation Team participating:

- Department of Ecology: Joenne McGerr, Brenden McFarland, Diane Butorac, Christina Kelllum, Christopher Clinton, Casey Dennehy, Brad McMillan
- Department of Commerce: Dave Anderson, Benjamin Serr, Sarah Vorpahl, Jason Henderson
- Washington Governor’s Office: Becky Kelley, Caitlyn Jekel
- Ross Strategic: Tom Beierle, Tristan Márquez, Heather Christopher

### Meeting Action Items

Responsible Party	Action Item	Start Date	Date Due
	None		

### Opening

Tom Beierle (Ross Strategic) welcomed Advisory Board members and meeting attendees and provided an overview of the meeting agenda and objectives. Kelly Hall, Climate Solutions, joining for her first meeting, introduced herself and spoke about her experience with facility siting and environmental review.

### State Updates

Becky Kelley and Caitlyn Jekel (Washington Governor’s Office) provided updates on Governor Inslee’s clean energy, Tribal consultation, and siting-related bills. This includes a bill to modernize the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC), make it a standalone agency, and include

Tribal government representatives to the council. The Governor's Office is exploring a tax incentive bill for the deferral of sales and use taxes for the construction of new clean energy-related projects. A bill will be introduced to support effective and early consultation with Tribes related to Climate Commitment Act investments. The governor's full [climate package and budget proposals](#) for the 2022 legislative session are available online.

### *State Agency Mapping and Resources Related to Low-Carbon Siting*

Diane Butorac (Ecology) introduced a series of presentations on state agency mapping tools and resources. As part of the siting study, Ecology and Commerce are developing a mapping tool prototype using available data to provide information for siting clean energy projects and to help developers make siting decisions. Input from the Advisory Board will be used to develop the prototype and to develop recommendations for future actions.

Staff members from Ecology, Commerce, and the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO) presented information and examples that may inform the design of a mapping tool for low-carbon energy project siting. These mapping presentations can be found on Ecology's [website](#):

- Ecology Data Viewers, *Brad McMillan, Ecology*
- Compatible Energy Siting Assessment (CESA), *Benjamin Serr, Dave Andersen, and Jason Henderson, Commerce*
- Data Categorizations, Examples and Platforms for Sharing Data, *Joanne Markert, OCIO*
- Marine Spatial Plan, *Casey Dennehy, Ecology*
- Siting Study Mapping Tool Prototype, *Christopher Clinton, Ecology*

During the question-and-answer period, a member noted that the value of the CESA mapping tool is to help developers learn who to contact so they can conduct early communications and begin to build relationships. Benjamin Serr (Commerce) confirmed that CESA is a consultation tool and not a screening tool. A member asked how Tribes were engaged in the CESA process. Serr stated that Commerce reached out to Tribes about the CESA mapping tool and used information from state agencies on Tribal contact areas, but he acknowledged that CESA does not include information from Tribes. He stated that inclusion of Tribal consultation layers would be a welcome addition if the tool is implemented. Casey Dennehy (Ecology) clarified that the energy suitability layer for the Marine Spatial Plan concerns the availability of offshore wind resources.

### *Other Mapping Tools and Resources*

Beierle introduced additional presentations as examples of mapping tools and resources. These presentations can be found on Ecology's [website](#):

- Columbia Basin Least Conflict Solar Siting, *Karen Janowitz, Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program*
- Power of Place Mapping, *Justin Allegro and Nicole Hill, The Nature Conservancy*

Nicole Hill (The Nature Conservancy) confirmed that the job growth tracked in the Power of Place Mapping model mainly reflected installation and manufacturing work. Hill explained that data from the

Natural Resource Conservation Service was used for the identification of high-quality farmlands and clarified that the model includes data on transmission line capacity and pricing.

### *Discussion of Mapping Resources*

The Advisory Board split into two breakout groups to discuss the potential purpose and functions of a mapping tool for low-carbon energy projects and the most valuable data for the tool.

Key take-aways about the purpose and functions of a mapping tool were:

- A tool will be most valuable early in the siting process (pre-application) to identify project considerations and opportunities and to support early consultation and engagement with agencies, Tribes, and communities.
- The tool should help applicants and others identify what to consider, but not be designed to indicate where there is a "green light" for projects.
- A logic/decision tree would help guide users through key steps/considerations.
- Tools should be simple enough for broad set of users (don't require specialized training).
- Through the tool, boost the technical capacity of users that may be capacity-constrained (for example, local agencies with limited technical expertise).
- Provide clear information about data sources--where data is coming from, how it can be used, and its limitations.
- Future versions could include:
  - Support for forecasting by including changes over time (e.g., due to a changing climate).
  - Identification of mitigation opportunities.
  - Information from future least conflict studies, like the WSU solar study (referenced above).

Breakout session discussions suggested the prototype could be used for the following use cases:

- By project applicants for early identification of siting considerations, opportunities (e.g., proximity to energy infrastructure), and consultation with agencies, Tribes, and communities.
- To support community engagement, for example, helping community members understand potential impacts, benefits, and alternatives.
- To support local planning--for example, to inform comprehensive planning and zoning.

Key data suggestions included:

- Tribal lands and cultural resources, recognizing that these should be identified by Tribes themselves, that some information is confidential, and that some impacts to sacred sites and/or cultural resources can't be mitigated.
- Local zoning information, recognizing that information is not currently available in consistent formats across the state.
- Environmental and social justice information.
- Areas favored for clean energy development--e.g., solar overlay zones, programmatic EIS.
- Existing resources/infrastructure that may be complementary to a project.
- Endangered species habitat.

- Conservation areas.
- Prime farmland.
- Undevelopable areas (and criteria for identifying them).

### *Closing*

The next meeting will be on February 9<sup>th</sup> and will focus on pre-application assistance and information.