



WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

Least-Conflict Solar Siting on the Columbia Plateau

WSU Energy Program

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Least-Conflict Solar Siting

The question

Where can large-scale solar be developed in the Columbia Plateau region while also ensuring that important habitat, productive farmlands and rangelands, and tribal treaty rights are protected?



Spiva Butte Chelan-Douglas Land Trust property in Douglas County
photo credit: Ferdi Businger

The process

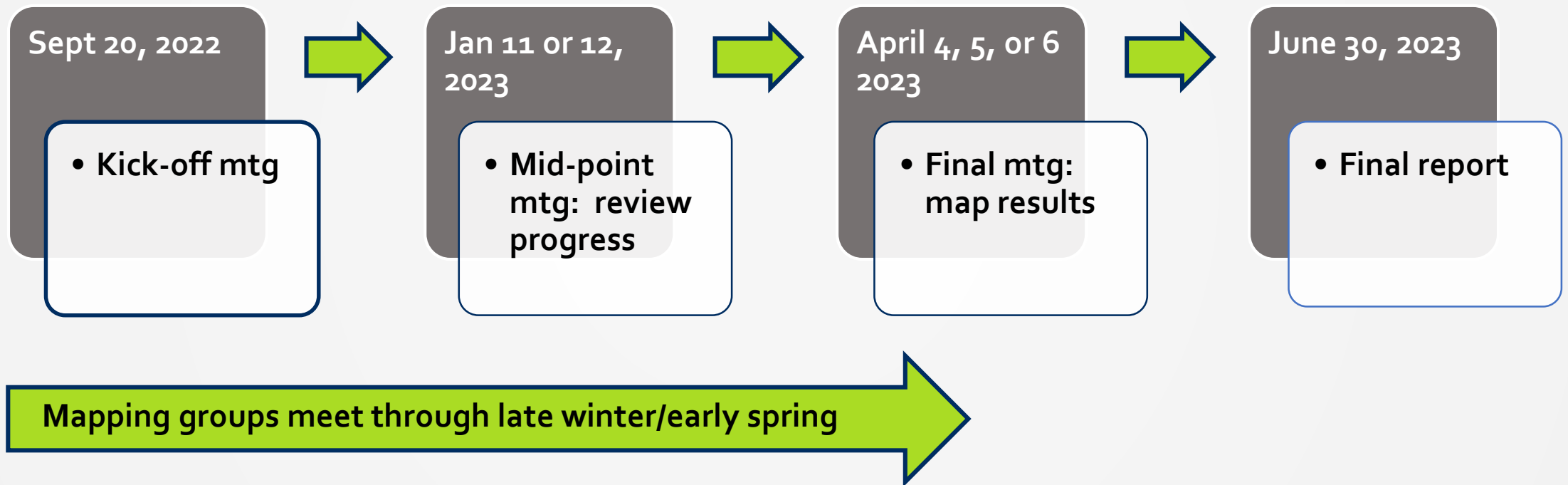
- Mapping groups of 15-25 individuals identify areas where the siting of large-scale solar might cause the least amount of conflict
 - Ag farmland
 - Ag rangeland
 - Environmental conservation
 - Solar industry
- Tribes are engaged outside of mapping groups
- Also, 3 large meetings with a wide audience
- Landscape-based, not site-specific, non-regulatory

Planning

- Working with Conservation Biology Institute (CBI) who will provide science and mapping component
 - CBI is creating framework in Data Basin, <https://databasin.org/>
- Gathering GIS data and mapping information
- Continuing outreach – mapping group members, tribal engagement, agencies, many more
- Developing agendas and discussion points for the large meetings
- Scheduling – **save September 20 for the kick-off**

Least-Conflict Solar Siting

Schedule




Mapping resources, a sampling

- Low-Carbon Energy Project Siting Improvement Study: mapping tool prototype
- Compatible Energy Siting Assessment Site Consultation Map Tool Prototype (CESA)
- Dept of Natural Resources Clean Energy map
- WA Environmental Health Disparities map
- WDFW maps
- Soil surveys
- National Renewable Energy Lab (NREL)
- Arid Lands Initiative
- Power of Place – The Nature Conservancy
- Counties
- Conservation Districts

Contact Karen with further suggestions

Thank you



Energy Program

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY

The Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program delivers program management, on-site assessments, analytical tools, and training to meet evolving energy challenges in the State of Washington, the Pacific Northwest, the United States, and internationally.

Partnering with a wide range of agencies, organizations, institutions, and businesses, our energy experts identify energy challenges and develop solutions.


Our customers include large and small businesses, public and private utilities, manufacturing plants, local and state governments, federal agencies and facilities, schools and universities, national laboratories, tribes, professional and trade associations, and consumers.

Our staff of energy engineers, energy specialists, technical experts, and software developers work out of Olympia, Washington. The WSU Energy Program is a self-supported department within the University.

We are part of the College of Agricultural, Human and Natural Resource Sciences (CAHNRS). Our Director reports to the Associate Dean of the College/ Director of WSU Extension.

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Columbia Plateau Least-Conflict Solar Siting

Exploring pathways to protect Washington's unique and diverse landscape values while producing the solar energy needed to help the state's utilities reach 100% clean electricity.

Washington State has a directive to eliminate coal in the state's resource mix by 2025, and for the state's electricity to be 100% carbon-free by the year 2045. One of the first milestones is to produce 80% of our electricity from clean sources by 2030. **To help meet the state's objectives, large-scale solar developments are necessary.**

The Columbia Plateau in eastern Washington supports productive farmland and rangeland as well as native shrubsteppe habitat. Less than 40% of intact shrubsteppe remains in eastern Washington. It is also some of the most preferred land in Washington state for solar energy developers.

The Least-Conflict Solar Siting project poses the question: **where can large-scale solar be developed in the Columbia Plateau region while also ensuring that important habitat, productive farmlands and rangelands, and tribal treaty rights are protected?**

To answer that question, Washington State University (WSU) Energy Program is leading a voluntary, collaborative effort that brings stakeholders together to identify areas in the Columbia Plateau region where the siting of utility-scale solar is less likely to generate significant conflict.

This non-regulatory, people-centered process is modeled after similar successful projects, such as in California's San Joaquin Valley. It is expected to

It is important to note that the process is landscape-scale and does not assess individual solar sites or proposals.