

# INTERAGENCY POLICY TEAM

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**Purpose:** Low Carbon Energy Project Siting Improvement Study

**Date:** Aug 26, 2021

**Attendees:** Joenne McGerr (ECY), Brenden McFarland (ECY), Diane Butorac (ECY), Sarah Vorpahl (COM), Marie Davis (COM), Brian Young (COM), Becky Kelley (GOV), Rob Whitlam (DAHP), Dever Haffner-Ratliffe (DNR), Tyson Thornburg (DNR), Kathleen Drew (EFSEC), Craig Bill (GOIA), Shanelle Pierce (ORIA), Kelly Craig (ORIA), Mark Vasconi (UTC), Michael Garrity (WDFW), Ben Blank (WDFW), Kelly McLain (WSDA), Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT), Greg Gachowsky (WSDOT)

ACTION ITEMS			
Responsible	Action	Start Date	Due Date
Diane Butorac, ECY	Set up future meetings in 3-hour blocks.	8/26/21	Completed 9/8/21
Diane Butorac, ECY	Present update on Greenhouse Gas Assessment for Projects (GAP) rule at next meeting.	8/26/21	September meeting
Sarah Vorpahl, COM	Provide timeline for Growth Management Act (GMA) Washington Administrative Code (WAC) update.	8/26/21	September meeting
Kathleen Drew, EFSEC & Diane Butorac, ECY	Set up meeting with Ecology on streamlining application for solar projects.	8/26/21	Completed 8/31/21
Sarah Vorpahl, COM	Present update on Clean Energy Transformation Act (CETA) work on identifying energy needs.	8/26/21	TBD

## MEETING SUMMARY

### Introductions

### Overview of siting study and role of Interagency Policy Team

#### Agency coordination

- Identify other siting and mapping work.
  - WDFW is mapping sage grouse and shrub/steppe habitat to assist in siting decisions.
  - WSDOT Joint Transportation Committee study of right-of-way for broadband infrastructure planned to finish by the end of 2021. Other infrastructure right-of-way (water, sewage, utilities) has already been identified.

- DNR is mapping agency-managed properties to identify which they may consider feasible for renewable energy projects. They are coordinating with stakeholders and expect to develop mapping layers and an interactive mapping tool.
- COM is updating the GMA WAC. Sarah will provide a timeline for this work.
- COM is collecting plans from utilities in January as part of CETA to identify the scale of energy needed over the next four years.
- Identify lessons learned/ past studies.
  - EFSEC is testing streamlining applications for solar energy projects to meet State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and EFSEC requirements. Kathleen and Diane will set up a meeting to discuss lessons learned.
- Discuss environmental review and permitting processes. (Group discussion)
  - Pre-application meetings can be very useful. Several agencies emphasized the importance of this and having early engagement on issues.
  - Jurisdictions can be confusing (who has responsibility and when in the process). Need to identify gaps and overlaps. As examples, there is overlap for refineries with EFSEC and other agencies, overlap for solar projects between EFSEC and local governments, and gaps for battery storage projects.
  - Agencies have different staff working on different aspects of projects for reviews and permitting which can be confusing for the public and developers.
  - The role of an agency is often confused with the applicant's role. This is a common public perception issue.
  - Misperception that a DNR land lease equals approval.
  - DNR often does a preliminary SEPA review before a land lease to identify issues early.
  - Having basic information as a starting point is useful; but permitting is also unique to each proposal. Could identify the links to information or points of contact for requirements, how to apply, what the permit process looks like.
  - Need better data from utilities on interconnection fees. For example, interconnection fees for solar projects may not be clear and uncertainty or high fees have stopped some projects from moving forward.
  - Steppe habitat is a critical issue and WDFW is working on mapping tool to help identify it early. One idea is to consider tiering for specific types of projects, like solar, to identify where it would be easier or harder to mitigate impacts.
  - Tribes should be involved and engaged early in the process, in the pre-application stage. Often tribes are not involved until the permitting process begins.
  - An informal but deliberative step from applicants to engage with tribes early would likely be helpful. Agencies could provide guidance to developers and applicants asking if they contacted and talked with potentially interested tribes.
  - Mapping tribal areas of interest could be helpful, but must ensure protection of sensitive information.
  - Consider if state agencies could consolidate to have one process like EFSEC.
  - Federal laws and permitting affects project permitting timelines. There are some areas where federal responsibilities are delegated to the state or integrated, but some are not. These can greatly affect projects.