

INTERAGENCY POLICY TEAM

Purpose: Low-Carbon Energy Project Siting Improvement Study
Date: Oct 28, 2021
Attendees: Joenne McGerr (ECY), Brenden McFarland (ECY), Diane Butorac (ECY), Michael Furze (COM), Sarah Vorpahl (COM), Brian Young (COM), Marie Davis (COM), Becky Kelley (GOV), Caitlyn Jekel (GOV), Allyson Brooks (DAHP), Dever Haffner-Ratliffe (DNR), Tyson Thornburg (DNR), Kathleen Drew (EFSEC), Sonia Bumpus (EFSEC), Shanelle Pierce (ORIA), Kelly Craig (ORIA), Michael Garrity (WDFW), Ben Blank (WDFW), Ahmer Nizam (WSDOT), Tristan Marquez (Ross Strategic), Tom Beierle (Ross Strategic)

ACTION ITEMS			
Responsible	Action	Start Date	Due Date
All agencies	Provide bulleted list of agency actions to improve environmental review and permitting processes (focus on clean energy projects).	9/23/21	11/08/21

MEETING SUMMARY

Presentations (available on [website](#))

- Environmental review and permitting processes (*Brenden McFarland and Diane Butorac, Ecology*)
- Customer requests and available online resources (*Shanelle Pierce and Kelly Craig, ORIA*)

Governor's Office Update (*Becky Kelley and Caitlyn Jekel, GOV*)

- Multiple efforts on clean energy ongoing, good communications between agencies is crucial.
- Likely Governor-proposed legislation in upcoming session related to siting clean energy facilities.
- Continue work with stakeholders on various issues which overlap with the siting study work, such as workforce development in transition to clean energy economy and meeting State Energy Strategy goals.

Interim Legislative Report Update (*Diane Butorac, Ecology*)

- The interim legislative report is due Dec. 1, 2021. Ecology and Commerce are drafting the report and additional information will be provided at the November meeting.

Improving Environmental Review and Permitting Processes (*Group discussion*)

- Consider both long- and short-term options in developing recommendations.
- Pre-application meetings are an effective tool that agencies and developers can use. The pre-application work can help set expectations and ensure necessary project information is provided to agencies.
- Providing funding to agency staff to work with developers early in the process would help improve the environmental review process.
- Important for agencies to be clear on expectations for applicants and developers.

- Early consultation and engagement with tribes is important.
- Ask tribes about desired communications with the state and developers in pre-application phase.
- Ask tribes about would be considered a “win” for tribes and tribal communities. Mitigation is still a loss. Does a project help the local energy grid? Does it help salmon?
- Mapping is an important way to provide information, for example, DAHP has information on cultural and historic resources and DNR has information on shrubsteppe habitat.
- Important to know from applicants early if a federal permit will be needed. This can have a big impact on the process, requirements, and timeline. For example, FERC, BLM and USACE permits and processes can take several years.
- Work by agency staff, including EFSEC, on large projects is typically funded by applicants. But funding to support early agency work to improve processes and get things done faster may be beneficial. For example, development of a one-stop concept or providing information in one place for all agencies would require additional funding and work to determine which agency would lead and processes for other agency support.
- Customer service and education are key. Every agency should know how to provide initial information (e.g., an overview of the environmental review process) before referring applicants to other agencies. All agencies should be prepared to provide customer assistance no matter which agency the applicant comes to first..
- Need further discussion on role of local government and how to engage with them. This could be a topic to bring up with the Advisory Board as well.
- Washington has unique requirements and out-of-state developers are often not aware or knowledgeable about what to expect. For example, tribal treaty rights, State Environmental Policy Act requirements, and the role of local government may not be well understood. Training on how Washington works may help provide information and clarify expectations, similar to the [Choose Washington](#) approach. This would require funding and staff.
- DNR has unique role as a manager of state-lands where clean energy could be developed. The agency controls over 3 million acres, though not all would be feasible or available for renewable energy development.
- The Department of Labor and Industries is involved in clean energy workforce development and has tax credits for clean energy. Reach out to them to see if interested in joining the team or presenting.
- The EFSEC Transmission Corridors Work Group is looking at infrastructure needs. Several team members participate in that group as well. Consider future presentation on this.
- The Interagency Policy Team has the right players in terms of representation to focus on clean energy developments. Continuing this interagency team long-term in some form should be considered. This may require funding.

Administrative Items

- The team determined a best practices document may be developed in the future but is not a current action item.
- At the November meeting, discuss current agency actions to improve environmental review and permitting and the interim legislative report.