

Clean Energy Advisory Group (CEAG) Meeting Notes

July 17, 2026 from 9-noon

Skagit Public Utility District Aqua Room, 1415 Freeway Drive, Mount Vernon

Purpose: *To provide policy guidance to County staff in drafting a recommended Clean Energy Code. Code amendments will include siting criteria and create a more efficient permitting process for clean-energy projects and will assess impacts, mitigation, identify suitable areas for development and result in predictable permitting for the community and clean energy developers alike.*

Remaining CEAG Meeting Dates (9-noon at Skagit PUD)

Aug. 7, 28; Sept. 11; Oct. 9, 30; Nov. 20 (tentative); Dec. 11 (tentative)

Advisory Group Members Present

Matthew Phillips	Stewards of Skagit (Non-Profit Land Use Group)
Denby Lloyd	Skagit Land Trust (Non-Profit Environmental Group)
Chuck Messenger	United Way Skagit (Non-Profit Vulnerable Communities)
MaryLee Chamberlain	Western County (District 1)
James Karlsgodt	Central County (District 2)
Craig Hansen	Eastern County (District 3)
Emily Hagin	Puget Sound Energy
Ken Huste	Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County
Betty Carteret	Climate Impact Advisory Committee
Steve Wright	Agricultural Advisory Board

Other Attendees

Robert Knoll, Presenter	Puget Sound Energy
Robby Eckroth	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lavelle Pilon	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Allen Rozema	Planning and Development Services (Skagit County)
Lyn Wiltse, Facilitator, Notetaker	PDSA Consulting, Inc.

Observers

Terry Sapp, Cole Burgess, Terry Nelson, and John Leaver

Action Items

- All Check County website weekly for updates / contact Robby with questions.
<https://www.skagitcounty.net/Departments/PlanningAndPermit/applicants.htm>
- Robby Ensure all of these documents are posted to the County Website, along with any “read-ahead” documents for CEAG meetings.
- Robby Consider establishing a shared secure website for information sharing among CEAG members.
- Lyn By July 31 email PSE presentation, these meeting notes, and Aug. 7 agenda.

Welcome / Setting the Stage

Lyn welcomed all, reviewed the purpose of this group, operating norms, and the meeting agenda. Allen recapped why this group has been convened and the expected deliverables.

Background / CEAG Purpose

Due to unprecedented growth in energy demand, Skagit County is receiving an increasing number of inquiries and applications for clean energy development. State mandates, such as the Clean Energy Transformation Act, are requiring energy companies to transition to cleaner energy sources. Skagit County has received a grant from the Department of Commerce to develop clean energy development regulations and to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) evaluating the environmental impacts and the possible sites for clean energy projects. The four energy sources being studied as a part of this project include solar, Fusion Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), and renewable fuels.

CEAG members are to provide input to Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff to consider in drafting a recommended Clean Energy Code. Code amendments will include criteria for the siting of sources of new clean energy and also help to guide the assessment of environmental impacts and mitigation strategies. They will also identify suitable areas for development, resulting in predictable and efficient permitting for the community as well as for the clean energy developers.

Allen emphasized that the focus of CEAG is providing input to County staff for drafting the code - not working specifically on the EIS. The consulting group Kimley-Horn has been hired to assist the County with the EIS. The County's deadline to submit a draft code to the Planning Commission is February 2027. An updated clean energy code must be adopted for Skagit County by May 2027.

The County will be gathering policy guidance from the CEAG while reaching out to gather additional public and agency input and will begin convening small stakeholder group meetings in August. The Board of County Commissioners has already begun government-to-government talks with the four federally recognized Tribes. Small group meetings will all be listed on the website and information from these groups will be shared with the CEAG.

Allen noted the model for the CEAG was the Agritourism Community Group whose recommendations informed the code written by PDS staff. CEAG meetings are scheduled three weeks apart. This allows for information developed for the EIS by Kimley-Horn to be shared as it is developed. CEAG meetings will conclude by the end of this year. Their recommendations will be shared with the Planning Commission. Public hearings will follow and will include a public comment period.

Allen noted the County already has some energy restrictions in place. For example, no solar, wind or battery energy storage systems are allowed on Agricultural-Natural Resource Lands (Ag-NRL). Therefore, they will focus staff resources on drafting clean energy siting criteria only in areas the County has deemed acceptable.

PDS staff will be writing new code and modifying some existing code. They are currently working with Kimley-Horn to review all existing code to determine what needs to be added/amended. They plan to share that information with the CEAG at the third meeting on August 28.

PSE Presentation: PSE's Transformation to Cleaner Energy

(Note: The entire presentation will be posted to the County website.)

Robert Knoll and Emily Hagin of PSE walked through a very informative slide show covering the following:

- Washington's clean energy goals and policies (some of the most ambitious climate policies in the country). And yet, ProPublica has reported that OR and WA are 49th and 50th in the nation in terms of developing clean energy facilities.
- Challenges and Opportunities
 - The demand for electricity is increasing rapidly, and the region is at risk of power supply shortfalls possible leading to rolling blackouts.
 - Renewable resources are intermittent and can lead to uncertainty and reliability challenges.
- New technologies: There is a need for on-demand, clean energy resources to replace carbon emitting resources.
- Clean energy potential in Skagit County:
 - Solar
 - Fusion/Small Modular Reactors
 - Distributed energy resources
 - Flexible capacity resources

Discussion:

- Questions after the presentation included specifics around which types of reactors is PSE considering regionally. Robert and Emily offered to follow up outside of this meeting, as many of the questions were beyond the scope of the CEAG mission.
- While PSE is considering both fission and fusion SMRs is PSE considering, Robby emphasized that that Skagit County is considering fusion reactors only. (EFSEC would control the siting and permitting of any fission projects).
- The two proposed BESS systems are in ideal locations in terms of energy generation requirements.
- The Energy and Environmental Economics (E3) study predicted a shortfall of nearly 9 gigawatts in the Northwest by 2030. Power supply shortfalls could lead to rolling blackouts during extreme conditions. The baseline number in the study assumes no action is taken.
- There is no relation between the sun shining, the wind blowing, and when people get home from work and plug in their EVs. It's all about managing/leveling out the peak demand. PSE is making it advantageous for individuals to only charge their EV during non-peak times. Solar panels on homes can feed back into the grid.

- Achieving the goal of being carbon neutral by 2030 allows natural gas (hybrid fuel) to be in the portfolio, substantially as a protector during peaking events.
- PSE's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP) is updated constantly, though it is a 5-year plan.
- PSE is looking to host large scale battery projects in coordination with communities (e.g., using 10-20 sq ft of school rooftops). While large-scale battery systems allow PSE to balance load in real time, smaller scale BESS installations can also be helpful to the overall baseload requirement.

Emily and Robert closed by thanking everyone and saying they would be happy to provide additional information at future CEAG meetings if requested to do so. They also suggested Energy Atlas as a great tool to see transmission systems.

Open Houses / Scoping Comments Received

Robby emphasized that Skagit County will be seeking recommendations from the CEAG on these four energy types:

- Solar - with focus on Distributed Energy Resources (DERs)
- BESS
- Renewable Fuels – Bio fuels and green hydrogen
- Fusion small modular reactors

They issued a held Determination of Significance (DS) and request for scoping comments on May 14 with a public comment period from May 14- June 16. They also held three Open Houses (in Concrete, Anacortes, and Mount Vernon). They received many comments during the Open Houses and also during the comment period.

Scoping focus areas:

- Earth resources
- Air quality and GHGs
- Water resources
- Species and habitat
- Energy and natural resources
- Environmental health and safety
- Impacts on over-burdened communities
- Tribal rights, interests, and resources
- Noise and vibration
- Visual quality
- Recreation
- Cultural resources
- Health and safety
- Transportation impacts
- Public services and utilities

38 Scoping comments were received from utilities, non-profit organizations, State agencies, area Tribes, and the Skagit community. There was hard support for planning for clean energy facilities and for creating a proper siting process. They heard many concerns about ensuring proper siting, including the importance of protecting the following areas:

- Agricultural working lands
- Streams and habitat
- Wetlands and water resources
- Community character
- Tribal treaty rights

They also heard comments about wanting to ensure:

- Appropriate residential setbacks
- Noise level standards
- Emerging planning and response planning
- Decommissioning plans
- Fire and life safety
- Proper and safe waste disposal

Other comments expressed concerns with:

- The lifecycle of greenhouse gas emissions from renewable fuel production as well as the emissions from manufacturing and transporting clean energy
- Impacts from energy failures that could disproportionately impact disadvantaged communities.

Robby noted the County is ensuring the EIS addresses the areas listed in the public comments. They are not adding or subtracting any of the energy types and will consider a statement to that effect in the draft EIS.

He also clarified that community input will inform the Action alternative which is the purpose of the CEAG. The final product of this group will be a suite of recommendations on the code framework that will be presented at the 3rd meeting on Aug. 28. Staff will then write a draft code which this group will then review to ensure their recommendations were properly considered. The EIS will be a tool to inform the Board of County Commissioners, which will ultimately decide whether to improve the code.

Next CEAG Meeting Date/Topics

August 7 from 9-noon at the PUD

Topics to include:

- Review of these meeting notes / Action Items
- Presentation by Kimley-Horn on Energy Types being considered and an overview of the clean energy code updates.