



Planning & Development Services

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Memorandum: Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Project Introduction

To: Planning Commission
From: Robby Eckroth, Senior Planner
Date: May 12, 2026
Re: Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Project Introduction

Project Overview

The purpose of the Skagit County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting project is to adopt clean energy regulations in unincorporated Skagit County by May 2027. Due to the unprecedented growth in energy demand across Washington State, along with new state mandates requiring that future energy projects be clean-energy based, Skagit County is receiving a rising number of inquiries and applications for new energy developments.

The Washington State Department of Commerce has developed grant opportunities to support the planning of clean energy projects across the state. Skagit County received a Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) grant to develop local clean energy development regulations and prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Skagit County has identified the following goals for the project:

- Retain local control over clean energy permitting where possible;
- Establish clear and consistent standards for project proponents and the public, and;
- Ensure that future clean energy development considers community values, environmental impacts, and mitigation strategies informed by public and Tribal input.

Which Types of Clean Energy will Skagit County be Evaluating?

The scope of the EIS allows four types of clean energy to be included in the EIS. Skagit County has identified the following clean energy uses as the most likely to be located in Skagit County:

- **Solar Energy.** Solar Energy can be larger utility scale projects or smaller community or microgrid projects. Land availability in Skagit County for Solar Energy may be limited, especially since conversion of Agricultural Natural Resource Lands is prohibited. Alternatively, Solar Energy can come in the form of Distributed Energy Resources (DER), which involve rooftop solar panels and batteries on existing development, which does not result in the conversion of Natural Resource Lands. DERs offer opportunity for utilities and energy users to work together and innovate to help meet rising energy demand.

- **Battery Energy Storage.** The purpose of Battery Energy Storage is to store excess energy from renewable sources or the grid and discharge during peak energy demand and can improve grid reliability and stabilize renewable energy outputs.
- **Small Modular Reactor (Nuclear).** Small Modular Reactors are smaller than conventional nuclear power facilities and are modular, meaning they can be factory assembled and transported for installation. Local jurisdictions can only permit fusion based nuclear facilities as the Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council reviews all fission nuclear energy projects.
- **Renewable Fuel.** Renewable Fuels include bioenergy and renewable hydrogen. Bioenergy generates energy by converting organic materials and include a range of conversion technologies, such as combustion, gasification, or biological processes, to produce energy. Renewable hydrogen uses non GHG emitting energy like wind, solar and hydropower to create hydrogen that can be used for power generation.

Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

The EIS is a technical document that will evaluate the potential significant environmental impacts of the energy uses being considered by Skagit County. This EIS will evaluate where different types of clean energy projects can be appropriately sited, as well as assess their potential impacts and identify appropriate mitigation measures.

On May 14th, 2026, Skagit County issued a [State Environmental Policy Act \(SEPA\) Determination of Significance \(DS\) and Request for Comments on Scope of EIS](#) (click link). The purpose of scoping is to narrow the focus of the EIS to significant environmental issues, to eliminate insignificant impacts from detailed study, and to identify alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS.

The EIS will include two alternatives, an **Action Alternative** and a **No Action Alternative**.

- The **Action Alternative** will evaluate potentially significant environmental impacts for solar energy, battery energy storage, small nuclear reactors, and renewable fuel facilities. The impacts associated with these uses will be assessed to determine appropriate locations, zones, significant adverse impacts, and mitigation and minimization measures. Where deemed appropriate, county permitting processes may be modified to streamline the local permitting pathway and provide clear development standards with known mitigation measures.
- The **No Action Alternative** will evaluate how energy development for solar energy, battery energy storage, small nuclear reactors, and renewable fuel facilities would occur within Skagit County based on the current development regulations with no changes. The development code standards and permitting processes currently established in Skagit County would be carried forward.

Skagit County will be requesting comments on the Scope of the EIS. **The 30-day comment period is from May 14, 2026 to June 16, 2026.** Written comments on the EIS can be submitted anytime prior to 4:30pm on June 16th, 2026.

Three scoping meeting open houses are being held in each region of Skagit County on June 9th and June 10th and will be a resource for the public to learn about the project and help identify key issues, potential impacts, alternatives to study, and community concerns before the project begins.

Community Engagement

Public engagement process is a key contributor to the project. Engagement during this project will provide insight into identifying impacts, potential mitigation measures, siting criteria, and streamlined permitting processes. Planning and Development Services will be holding the following opportunities for the community to participate in the project:

- **Clean Energy Advisory Group.** As part of this project Skagit County is convening a Clean Energy Advisory Group. The purpose of the Clean Energy Advisory Group is to provide policy guidance to Planning and Development Services 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. The effort will assess impacts, mitigation, identify suitable areas for development, and result in predictable permitting for the community and clean energy developers alike. Skagit County PDS is currently accepting applications for the Clean Energy Advisory Group.
- **Small Group Interviews.** Meetings with stakeholders across interest groups and agencies will be held to share information and hear opportunities and concerns from impacted parties and subject matter experts.
- **Open Houses.** Three open houses will be held for the scoping notice period and three additional open houses will be held for the draft EIS in Fall 2026.
- **EIS Comment Periods.** In addition to the scoping notice comment period, a 30-day comment period will be held for the draft EIS in Fall 2026.
- **Planning Commission Public Comment Period and Public Hearing.**
- **Board of County Commissioners Public Comment Period and Public Hearing.**

Tribal Engagement

Skagit County will be reaching out to Federally recognized Tribal Governments to request government-to-government dialog and assistance in identifying where clean energy projects should be located and how they should be regulated.

Project Website

For more information on the project please visit the project website which is linked below:

<https://www.skagitcounty.net/CESP>