



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
DEPARTMENT OF ECOLOGY

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September 25, 2024

Dear Interested Parties,

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature directed the state Department of Ecology (Ecology) to conduct a study to assess and disclose probable significant adverse environmental impacts from utility-scale solar energy facilities. Revised Code of Washington (RCW) [43.21C.535](#) also requires the report evaluate measures to avoid and reduce likely impacts.

Ecology developed this draft Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (PEIS) to provide consistent and useful information that the public, local and state agencies, Tribes, and developers can use to help review and plan for utility-scale solar energy facilities. A PEIS is a type of environmental review used for planning; it is not an evaluation of a specific project. Each individual utility-scale solar energy project will need a separate project-level review.

Utility-scale solar energy facilities help support the state's transition to clean energy. When electricity from a solar energy facility replaces the electricity generated by an existing fossil fuel-based facility, it helps reduce overall greenhouse gas emissions in Washington. However, utility-scale solar energy facilities may have adverse environmental impacts. This PEIS evaluates, at a broad level, different types of solar energy facilities to identify probable environmental impacts and ways to avoid and reduce those impacts.

The PEIS evaluates the following types of utility-scale solar energy facilities as well as a No Action Alternative:

- **Utility-scale solar facilities:** solar energy facilities capable of generating between 20 and 1,200 megawatts of energy on sites between 200 to 12,000 acres in size.
- **Utility-scale solar facilities with battery energy storage systems:** facilities that also include one or two battery energy storage systems, each capable of storing up to 500 megawatts of energy.
- **Utility-scale solar facilities that include agricultural uses:** dual-use facilities with agriculture and solar energy facility operations.

Ecology is providing information at three different levels of detail. The PEIS summary includes an overview of the findings. The draft PEIS document includes more information on potential impacts and mitigation actions. The appendices include detailed and technical evaluations of resources. The following resource areas are evaluated in the draft PEIS:

- Aesthetics and visual quality
- Air quality and greenhouse gases
- Biological resources
- Earth resources

- Energy and natural resources
- Environmental health and safety
- Environmental justice and impacts to overburdened communities
- Historic and cultural resources
- Land use
- Noise and vibration
- Public services and utilities
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Tribal rights, interests, and resources
- Water resources

Potential impacts on environmental resources associated with constructing, operating, and decommissioning utility-scale solar energy facilities are analyzed in the PEIS. The findings identify resources where significant impacts are not likely as well as resources that could be significantly impacted. The study also considers cumulative impacts.

The PEIS identifies actions to avoid and reduce potential environmental impacts from a utility-scale solar energy project. In some cases, mitigation measures can reduce probable adverse impacts to a less-than-significant level. In other cases, mitigation actions may reduce impacts, but not necessarily to a level below significance. Mitigation approaches will depend on the specific project and site.

The report can help a developer choose a suitable site, design a project, and submit a proposal that has considered potential environmental impacts. State and local agencies must use the information in the PEIS, as well as other publicly available information and site-specific details, to inform their environmental reviews and permitting decisions.

Comments on this draft PEIS will be accepted during the 33-day comment period (from 12:00 p.m., September 25 through 11:59 p.m., October 28, 2024). Comments should focus on the substance of the draft PEIS and be as specific as possible. This could include comments on the adequacy of the PEIS, alternatives, methodology used, mitigation measures identified, or additional information that should be considered. Comments may be submitted online, by mail, or at a public hearing. The draft PEIS and information on how to comment or attend a public hearing can be found on the [PEIS website](#).

Ecology will review and consider all comments received during the public comment period for the draft PEIS and may revise the study as a result. The final PEIS will be completed by the legislatively mandated date of June 30, 2025, and made available to the public.

Questions about the draft PEIS or process may be directed to Diane Butorac at [diane.butorac@ecy.wa.gov](mailto:diane.butorac@ecy.wa.gov) or (360) 407-6600.

Sincerely,



Diane Butorac  
SEPA Responsible Official

Clean Energy Coordination Section, Shorelands and Environmental Assistance Program  
Washington State Department of Ecology