Focus on: Recommendations for improving siting and permitting of clean energy projects

Washington's clean energy transition

In 2019, the Clean Energy Transformation Act was signed into state law which committed Washington to an electricity supply free of greenhouse gases by 2045. The Clean Fuel Standard reduces pollution from transporation fuels, the largest source of greenhouse gas emission in Washington. The 2021 State Energy Strategy, overseen by Commerce, is a roadmap for meeting these targets. Commerce projects Washington's electricity demand will likely double by 2050. This means that investing in new clean energy facilities will be key in securing our energy future.

Clean Energy Siting Council

In 2023, the Washington Legislature established the Interagency Clean Energy Siting Coordinating Council to support the state's clean energy transition and ensure actions among state agencies are done efficiently. Council members represent 13 state agencies, boards and commissions, co-led by the departments of Ecology and Commerce.

The council meets monthly to identify policy-level issues and coordinate among agencies regarding clean energy siting and permitting. They address concerns such as limitations of the state's electrical grid, planning for emerging technologies, and supporting Tribal clean energy development and local government planning. The council does not make decisions on specific projects but offers high-level recommendations to the Legislature annually. To help shape its recommendations, members meet regularly with interested parties and Tribes throughout the year to seek input on recommendations for clean energy siting and permitting.

2025 recommendations for clean energy

The council submits an annual legislative report on Oct. 1 documenting state and federal actions related to clean energy and recommendations to improve siting and permitting clean energy projects. The 2025 annual report contains 13 new recommendations designed to advance the state's energy policies, with a focus on current or expected clean energy technologies, and process and policy actions promoting coordination across multiple state agencies.

The recommendations also take into account recent federal policy changes and state and federal funding constraints that will affect Washington's transition to clean sources of energy. Given the urgency of developing clean energy to comply with state law and meet rising state electricity demand, the council sought to provide meaningful recommendations and efficiencies that could be implemented within these restraints.

We believe implementing these actions will help meet our clean energy goals:

- **Address transmission capacity limitations**
  - Establish a state entity to develop and finance transmission projects
  - Develop transmission siting and permitting tools
  - Improve the capacity and efficiency of existing transmission infrastructure
- **Support clean energy development**
  - Support clean energy development that does not require transmission connections
  - Incentivize existing energy infrastructure upgrades

  - Promote Tribal clean energy projects
- **Improve permitting through meaningful engagement and planning**
  - Provide long-term funding for Tribal project review
  - Engage with Tribes on categorical exemptions under the State Environmental Policy Act
  - Support local governments in clean energy planning
  - Assess lands available for energy development
- **Support community engagement**
  - Develop community engagement tools
- **Address emerging technologies**
  - Support local government response to emerging technologies
  - Identify and resolve obstacles to developing geothermal energy resources

Improvements in siting and permitting (2024 – 2025)

After the council released its 2024 report, lawmakers and state agencies adopted many of its recommendations, including:

- Completing a report with ideas for consolidating applications and permits for clean energy projects.
- Finalizing statewide programmatic environmental impact statements for utility-scale solar, onshore wind, and green hydrogen facilities.
- Studying rural clean energy economics and community engagement.
- Exploring best practices for community and Tribal benefit agreements.
- Continuing funding for state agencies and grants for local governments, Tribes and communities to plan, site, conduct environmental reviews and permit clean energy projects.
- Reporting on emerging technologies such as nuclear fusion and sustainable aviation fuel, and developing an environmental justice toolkit for green hydrogen projects.
- Launching a collaborative process to identify opportunities and risks associated with developing state geothermal energy resources.

Get engaged in 2026

We hold workshops and virtual meetings throughout the year to hear issues and ideas, and share recommendation ideas and drafts.

For information regarding these opportunities for input, please visit our website and sign up for our e-mail list.

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To request an ADA accommodation, email cleanenergy@ecy.wa.gov, call (360) 407-6600, or dial 711 to call through the Washington Telecommunications Relay for services like text telephone (TTY). Visit Ecology.wa.gov/ADA for more accessibility information.