

# Solar energy bill adds incentives for developers of large projects

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**  
East Oregonian

Industrial-scale solar farms are getting a big financial push in Oregon after Gov. Kate Brown signed House Bill 4037 Wednesday in Pendleton.

The bill directs the Oregon Business Development Department to establish incentives for projects between 2 and 10 megawatts. It takes roughly 8.3 acres of solar panels to generate a megawatt of electricity, according to a 2013 report by the National Renewable Energy Laboratory.

"These are not the systems you see on businesses and houses," said Jeff Bissonnette, executive director of the Oregon Solar Energy Industries Association. "If something is 2 to 10 megawatts, these are fairly large facilities."

Qualifying projects will receive half a cent per kilowatt hour of electricity they produce for five years. Applications will be accepted until the program reaches a maximum of 150 megawatts, or by Jan. 2, 2017 — whichever comes first. Projects must have a deal with a commercial utility or electric cooperative to distribute the power.

Bissonnette figures about 16-18 projects could potentially benefit under HB 4036.

"It really is targeted at projects that are shovel-ready," Bissonnette said.



**Brown**

**"As UEC's load grows and we continue to add new renewable resources, we'll be looking for programs that will benefit our members."**

— **Steve Meyers,**  
Umatilla Electric spokesperson

"They might need just one more boost to get them over the finish line."

State lawmakers allocated \$951,561 toward the Solar Incentivization Fund during the 2017-19 biennium, which includes the cost to hire a new program manager with Business Oregon. HB 4037 passed the House by a vote of 51-4 and 22-6 in the Senate. Rep. Greg Barreto, R-Cove, and Sen. Bill Hansell, R-Athena, both voted in favor of the bill. Rep. Greg Smith, R-Heppner, was excused from voting.

Maximum payments over five years are estimated at \$8.22 million. The fund sunsets after Jan. 2, 2023.

Bissonnette said the bill is a major win for the Oregon solar industry, especially after the legislature passed a much larger, much more controversial bill requiring Portland General Electric and Pacific Power to double its renewable energy mandate by 2040.

In order for a solar array to qualify under HB 4037, it must be located within Oregon. Assuming the program reaches its full potential, Bissonnette said the state could almost double its current solar capacity of 85 megawatts.

"That's a big step," he said. "Those

types of (industrial) projects will work hand in hand with smaller resources located on homes and businesses across the state."

Currently, just .07 percent of Oregon's electricity comes from solar. But there are some larger industrial developments on the horizon for Eastern Oregon, including a 6-megawatt project near the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport in Pendleton.

The Umatilla Electric Cooperative has also purchased 80 acres from the Port of Umatilla to invest in future solar projects. Since HB 4037 is a cash payment rather than a tax credit, the co-op would be able to participate, said spokesperson Steve Meyers.

"As UEC's load grows and we continue to add new renewable resources, we'll be looking for programs that will benefit our members," Meyers said.

Bissonnette foresees more potential for solar in the region, given the area's ample summertime sun and swaths of undeveloped land.

"Solar has a big part to play in Oregon's energy future," he said.

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# Hermiston students compete in school's first agriscience fair

By **JENNIFER COLTON**  
East Oregonian

More than 200 Hermiston High School students put agriculture science into practice this quarter and, for the first time, the students could show off their projects in a school agriscience fair.

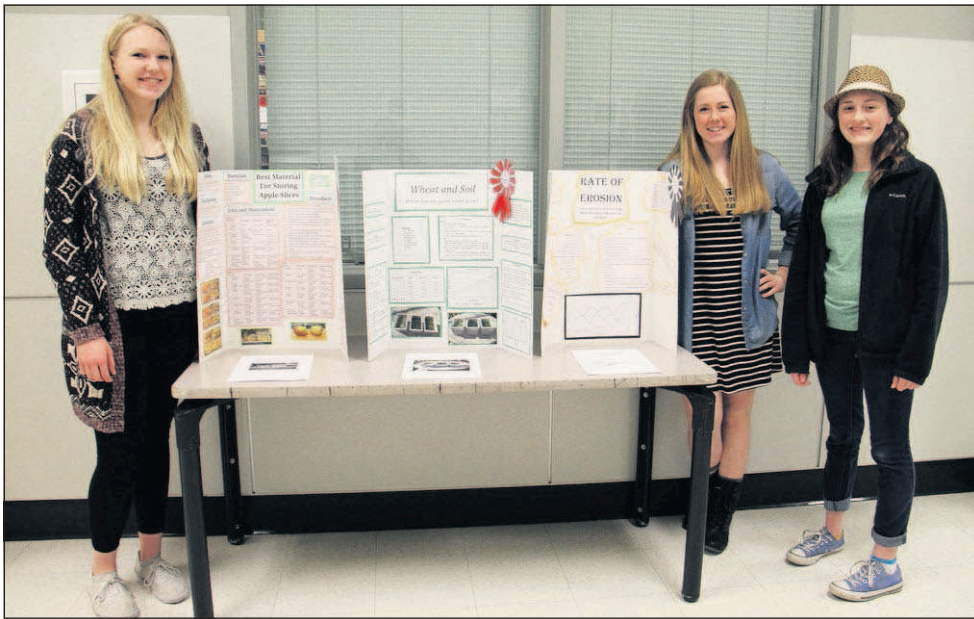
"We really want to do projects that are learning by doing and are application based," HHS agriculture teacher Leah Smith said Thursday. "What better way to teach the scientific method than by doing it?"

To prepare for the fair, each student in the agriculture-science classes picked a research project and conducted an experiment. Projects ranged from growing plants in different lights to testing hair growth in cattle. Students were graded not on "how cool" the project was but on data, conclusions and the application of the scientific method.

This week, students presented their projects during the agriscience fair to coincide with parent-teacher conferences.

"It's a positive for parents when they come to conferences to show what the students are learning," Smith said.

Students competed for cash prizes, which went to:



Staff Photo by Jennifer Colton

**Jenna Holt, from left, Reed Middleton and Megan Baskins all took home ribbons in Hermiston High School's first agriscience fair.**

• Jenna Holt, ninth grade, first place, best material for storing apple slices

• Reed Middleton, 10th grade, second place, soil type on wheat growth height

• Megan Baskins, ninth grade, third place, how different ecosystems show erosion

Thursday, all three students said the project involved more work than they expected.

"It was different than what we do in other classes," Middleton said. "If we do get to do an experiment, it's usually just in a class period.

This was over the course of weeks. It was good to see how experiments develop over time."

Baskins said she enjoyed being able to take initiative to create her own experiment, and all three recommended choosing a project you are interested in or have background in.

"There's a wide variety of things you can do. There's a lot of hands-on experiments to do in ag science. I would encourage anyone to try ag," Holt said. "Take hold of it and have fun with it."

The three students also

gave credit for the fair's success to their teachers.

"They make sure we do hands-on and we're not just reading out a text book," Middleton said. "We have great teachers and they make sure we do the best to our potential."

Smith said she is already planning on bringing the agriscience festival back next year, with a few changes. Next year, the project will give students a little more time and will be earlier in the year to allow for the winning students to compete at a state competition.

## BRIEFLY

### Tax exemptions expire on \$60M in investments

HERMISTON — The expiration of two enterprise zone tax exemptions added \$60 million to Hermiston's tax rolls in 2015.

A \$35 million investment in 2009 by DuPont-Pioneer Seed and \$25 million by Shearer's Foods in 2011 both had their property tax incentives expire on July 1, 2015.

The enterprise zone was designed to encourage economic development by giving businesses in certain industries a three- to five-year property tax break on new construction or equipment if the investment adds new jobs to the economy.

Both DuPont-Pioneer Seed and Shearer's Foods still have enterprise zone exemptions on other investments, according to a news release from the city of Hermiston, and their exemption claim forms filed for those projects show they added a combined 51 new full-time jobs in the Hermiston area in 2015.

Since DuPont's 2009 expansion, the two companies have added a total of 306 new jobs with a payroll of \$8.67 million in the enterprise zone.

The property taxes paid on DuPont's \$35 million investment and Shearer's \$25 million investment will go to support the city of Hermiston, Umatilla County and taxing districts such as Hermiston School District and Hermiston Fire & Emergency Services.

### Hermiston slates kinder registration

HERMISTON — The Hermiston School District will hold a spring kindergarten registration window April 4-15 for students entering kindergarten in the 2016-17 school year. Registration will be held at each elementary school main office from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. daily.

Parents/guardians must register students at their attendance area school. To verify a boundary school, adults may locate their home address on the district boundary map or call a school directly for assistance.

Desert View: 1225 S.W. Ninth St., 541-667-6900  
Highland Hills: 450 S.E. 10th St., 541-667-6500  
Rocky Heights: 650 W. Standard Ave., 541-667-6600  
Sunset: 300 E. Catherine Ave., 541-667-6700  
West Park: 555 S.W. Seventh Ave., 541-667-6800

To be eligible for enrollment into kindergarten for the fall, students must be five years old by Sept. 1, 2016, or born on or before September 1, 2011.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to bring the student's birth record (birth certificate, baptismal certificate or passport); Social Security number; proof of residence; and health/immunization records to complete the enrollment process.

Spanish translation services will be available.

### Milton-Freewater, Athena-Weston to hold kindergarten registration

ATHENA — The Athena-Weston and Milton-Freewater Unified school districts will be holding kindergarten registrations in April.

Milton-Freewater will hold its kindergarten drive April 5 and April 7, from 4-6 p.m. at Grove Elementary School, 129 S.E. 15th St.

Children must be five years old by Sept. 1 to enroll in kindergarten. Immunization records and a state birth certificate must be provided by parents. Interpreters will be available.

For additional information, contact Grove Principal Ami Muilenburg at 541-938-3233.

Further south, Athena-Weston will hold its registration day April 6 from 3:30-6 p.m. at Athena Elementary School, 375 S. Fifth St.

In addition to immunization records and birth certificate, the district will also evaluate children on their kindergarten readiness.

Kindergarten enrollees are required to turn five no later than Aug. 31.

Parents can call Athena Elementary School at 541-566-3581 to schedule an appointment.

### Undersheriff's retirement party open to the public

BOARDMAN — Morrow County's long-serving undersheriff is taking off his star.

Steve Myren, 53, has decided 30 years is enough in law enforcement and emergency services. He and his wife, Mim Myren, have invited the public to his retirement party Saturday from 1-4 p.m. at the Port of Morrow's Riverfront Center, Boardman.



**Myren**

Mim Myren said there will be snacks, finger foods and soft drinks, and she would like folks to bring their stories about Steve. There also will be a plaque presentation for Steve Myren at 2 p.m.

Myren last summer won \$5.5 million playing the Oregon Lottery. Myren took the money in annual payouts over 25 years. After taxes, that's approximately \$130,000 per year. He said at the time the winnings will make retirement easier.

Myren as undersheriff was involved in many criminal cases in Morrow County, but he also applied his expertise in emergency management to help disaster areas in the United States. He also stopped a few local disasters, such as in 2014 when he saved a Walla Walla man from drowning in the Columbia River before a Fourth of July celebration. Myren received Irrigon's Public Safety Person award that year.

# Pendleton sued twice over same water main

East Oregonian

The Hunter family and the city of Pendleton are familiar foes in the courtroom, where they will meet again next month.

Howard and Theresa Hunter filed a \$200,000 lawsuit against the city of Pendleton Nov. 12, 2015 alleging that a leak from a city water line that runs near their 516 S.E. Third Street home flooded their property, a suit not all that different from the one the couple filed against the city in 2007.

In the 2007 suit, the

Hunters allege a nearby water main broke in both 2005 and 2006, causing water to run down South Hill and collect on their property.

The complaint states the Hunter's house sustained damage to its yard, foundation, retaining walls and landscaping.

Howard and Theresa Hunter each demanded \$50,000 for negligence, \$50,000 for the water trespassing on their property and \$100,000 for emotional distress.

Representing the city, Salem attorney Gerald

Warren responded by writing that any damage to the Hunters' home was caused by the house not meeting city code.

The city would end up settling with the Hunters for \$57,500 in 2008, but the two parties find themselves in a similar legal battle six years later.

This time, the Hunters

are seeking \$100,000 for damages and \$100,000 for emotional distress for a 2013 leak.

Warren is again representing the city, which maintains the damage was caused by the Hunters inadequate drainage system.

Both sides will appear in court April 3 for a status check.

**Quality Time.**

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Pendleton Center for the Arts - 214 North Main St.

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