

# Temporary rules restrict solar development

By MATEUSZ PERKOWSKI  
EO Media Group

Oregon's land use regulators have temporarily expanded restrictions on solar arrays on high-value farmland over the objections of advocates who claim they'll impede development.

Solar facilities larger than 12 acres on high-value farmland have required conditional use permits in Oregon, but ambiguities in the regulatory language raised concerns among farm and conservation groups.

For example, one project was approved without a permit last year because the county government determined it didn't "preclude" agriculture use, since bees could still forage beneath the solar panels.

In response to these concerns, the Land Conservation and Development Commission issued temporary rules clarifying that solar projects cannot "use, occupy or cover" more than 12 acres, regardless of whether they "preclude" farm uses.

During a Jan. 24 meeting in Salem, the commission voted to approve additional provisions prohibiting most solar development on top-quality soils: those

defined as Class I, Class II, prime and unique.

However, the revised rules will allow solar facilities of up to 20 acres on such soils if the project includes a "farm use element" for the project's duration, as determined by county land use rules. The special rules for "dual use" facilities are set to expire in 2022.

Due to a request to submit additional information, the commission will also revisit the solar rules again at its meeting on March 21-22 with the goal of enacting permanent regulations.

A representative of Renewable Northwest, a nonprofit that supports solar energy, hopes the additional information will be compelling enough for the commission to decide changes need to be made to the rules.

"From the perspective of solar interests, the rule is extremely prohibitive and has the potential to cripple the state's community solar program before it really gets going," said Rikki Seguin, the group's policy director.

Under Oregon's community solar program, residents could subscribe to a shared solar facility within their utility's service district, but the recently adopted rules could greatly restrict where projects could be built in the



Sheep graze underneath a solar array at Oregon State University in Corvallis, where researchers discovered grass growing more lush later in the season than elsewhere in the pasture. Such dual use projects are subject to special provisions under new Oregon rules for solar developments.

Contributed by Oregon State University/Capital Press

Willamette Valley, Seguin said.

Solar facilities can help Oregon farmers earn extra income to keep their land in the family and the property can ultimately be returned to agricultural use, she said.

"There's a fixed life to solar facilities," Seguin said, adding that preserving Oregon farmland should

be balanced with developing the state's clean energy economy.

"What we see missing from these rules is any consideration of balance."

The farmland preservation group 1,000 Friends of Oregon supports the temporary rules in light of the "challenging process" and "strong interests on all sides

of the issue," said Meriel Darzen, rural lands attorney for the nonprofit.

"In the end, we feel the department did the best it could with the very difficult position it was in," she said.

The regulation takes the "best of the best soils" off the table while leaving enough land open so solar development can occur in

the appropriate areas, she said.

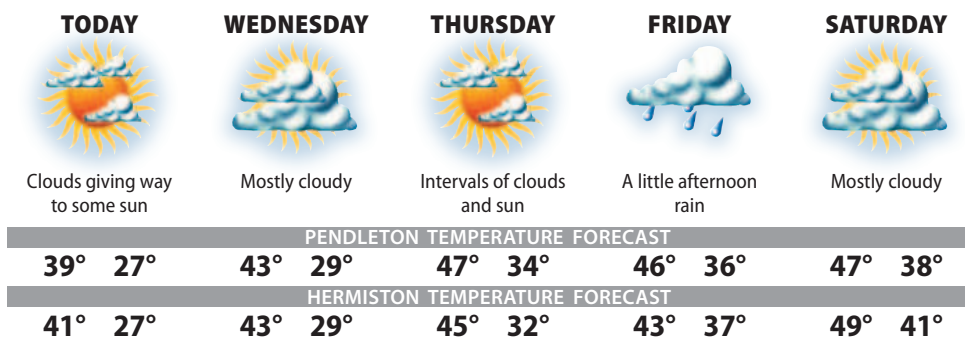
The rules are likely just the beginning of the conversation and 1,000 Friends of Oregon would like to see Oregon continue to revisit the issue and develop a statewide vision for renewable energy and land use, Darzen said.

Data collected by Oregon's Department of Land Conservation and Development — which is overseen by the commission — indicates 80 projects are currently proposed on nearly 1,000 acres of high-value farmland in the Willamette Valley.

Although solar advocates argued that proposed solar projects represent less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the nearly 1.46 million acres of high-value farmland in the Willamette Valley, DLCD recommended enacting the stricter regulations because the farmland impacts have been "disproportionate" in some areas.

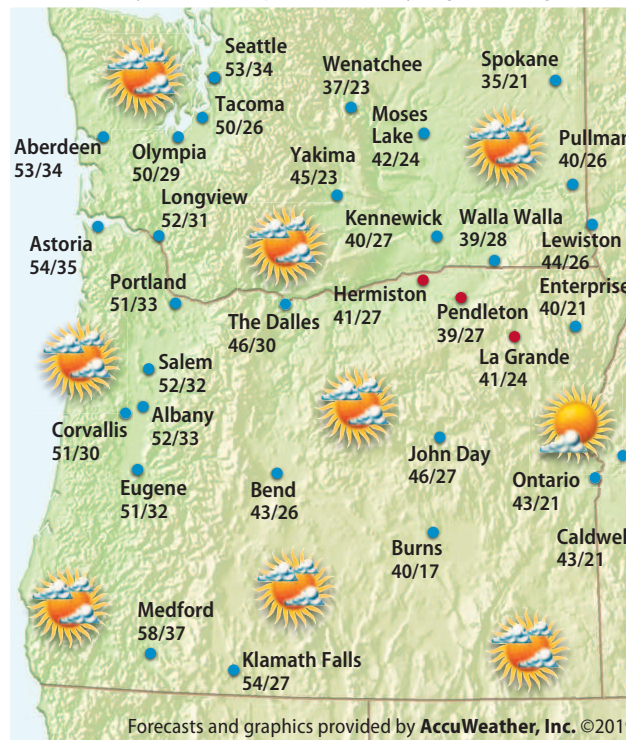
The proposed conversion of nearly 1,000 acres of high-value farmland in the region "in a relatively short period of time" indicated that the existing rules for solar development were "too permissive" in the context of preserving farmland, the agency said.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	36°	31°
Normals	43°	28°
Records	67° (1931)	-14° (1957)

HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.

TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	40°	34°
Normals	44°	29°
Records	61° (1984)	-21° (1957)

WINDS (in mph)	Today	Wed.
Boardman	ENE 4-8	NE 3-6
Pendleton	NNW 4-8	N 4-8

## SUN AND MOON

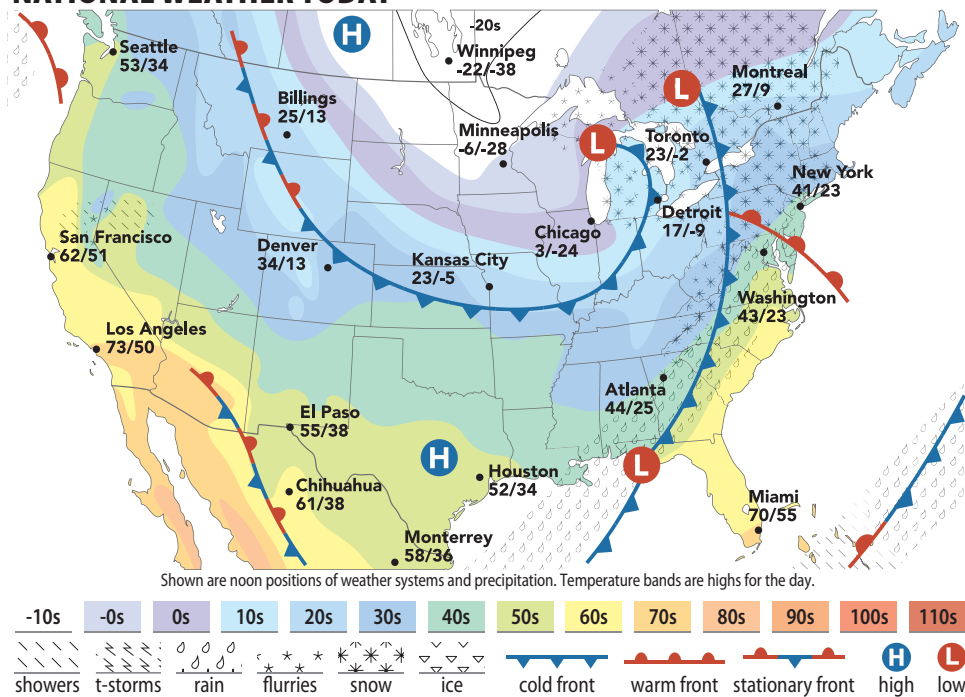
Sunrise today	7:21 a.m.
Sunset tonight	4:56 p.m.
Moonrise today	2:13 a.m.
Moonset today	12:16 p.m.

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 82° in McAllen, Texas Low -29° in Pellston, Mich.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



## BRIEFLY

### Salem seeks millions to improve drinking water

SALEM (AP) — City leaders in Salem met with state legislators last week to discuss funding an \$80 million plan to fortify the city's water system and ensure drinking water is free from harmful algal toxins.

The Statesman Journal reports the plan includes developing an ozone contact chamber to remove cyanotoxins, digging wells to provide a backup water supply and building berms to protect the treatment plant next to the North Santiam River from flooding.

Officials said they will ask the state to help pay for the upgrades. The need for cleaning out cyanotoxins and developing a backup water system became apparent to city officials last summer when Salem experienced a month-long drinking water crisis.

### Idaho fisheries forecast poor for chinook salmon season

LEWISTON, Idaho (AP) — An early forecast by fisheries managers in Idaho indicates a poor outlook for the upcoming chinook salmon season.

A group of federal, state and tribal fish-

eries managers predicts just over 48,000 spring chinook will return to the mouth of the Snake River, the Lewiston Tribune reported.

Last year's forecast had expected a return of 107,400 chinook, but just 67,595 showed up. This year's forecast by the Technical Advisory Committee includes a predicted return of 8,200 wild spring chinook and fewer than 40,000 hatchery fish.

### Man guilty but insane in killings of father, pedestrians

SPRINGFIELD (AP) — A man accused of killing his father and two pedestrians in 2015 has been sentenced to spend the rest of his life in the care of the Oregon Health Authority Psychiatric Security Review Board.

The Register Guard reports that Michael Jefferson Bryant, 34, was found guilty except for insanity Friday by Lane County Circuit Court Judge Ilisa Rookeley for three counts of aggravated murder, two counts of attempted murder, two counts of first-degree assault, aggravated first-degree animal abuse, first-degree arson, and fleeing or attempting to elude a police officer.

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### Diabetes Self Management Series

February 7<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup>

9:30am to 11:30am

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