

Developing solar power: How we got here and what comes next

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Cathy Ehli

The Confederated Tribes have a big opportunity on the horizon: Developing solar power. Solar is a central piece of Warm Springs Power and Water Enterprises’ work to unlock more opportunities to manage natural resources and invest in the community’s well-being. The tribes will set the example for what culturally appropriate, tribal-led solar development looks like. Let us explain how we got here, and what you can expect in the future.

How did we decide on solar? We’ve taken a close look at all the options. Power and Water commissioned a study in 2010 that weighed the benefits of solar, wind, geothermal and biomass as renewable energy sources. It showed that solar is the best option because of its geographic compatibility with the tribes’ reservation, plus the manufacturing, installation and maintenance jobs it will make available for tribal members. It will also save the tribes money, because it’s less expensive compared to the other options.

How will solar benefit the Tribes? Solar development will increase tribal revenue, and build resilience in the face of the climate crisis. The economic boost will come from selling solar energy to the Willamette Valley, via infrastructure that already exists: the Bethel-Round Butte transmission line. It’s a long-term project, because it will take eight to

10 years to upgrade the transmission line. Ultimately, though, the increased revenue can be invested back into the community, and will allow for more natural resource management work.

Oregon energy zones Due to how Oregon’s energy grid is set up, it’s important for us to note that it’s not possible for Power and Water to provide electricity to individual homes on the reservation with power from the dams and associated solar development. The grid is divided into separate service zones. The reservation is serviced by PacifiCorp, whereas the energy we currently generate goes to places serviced by Portland General Electric. In Oregon, utility service zones are determined through a combination of state regulations, municipal ordinances and agreements between utilities and local governments. That means that, just like the energy from the Pelton Project, the solar energy we generate will travel down the Bethel-Round Butte transmission line to be sold in the Willamette Valley and potentially beyond.

Other benefits There are other direct benefits that solar power will bring to the community, though.

As the climate crisis causes more extreme weather events, often leading to power outages, solar will ensure that members like you are taken care of. It is expected to power the heating and cooling at community spaces like Kah-Nee-Tah resort and eventually longhouses, even during power outages.

Who will help us make this happen? All of this—increasing Tribal revenues, providing relief during extreme weather events—lies in our future. Right now, the enterprises are focused on ensuring that solar development moves forward with trusted partners who will work with the tribes in a culturally appropriate way. Together with Tribal Council, we have selected BrightNight, the renewable power producing company, as one of our partners. BrightNight has qualified experience working with tribal communities, and prioritizes community input. Here are the steps BrightNight has followed in past projects:

1. The BrightNight team gathers preliminary information about the potential layout and location of a project

2. They connect with people in the community to learn how the project can provide direct benefits to them
3. They develop a plan based on that feedback, to ensure the project’s long-term revenue can support initiatives important to tribal members. Some examples of initiatives they’ve supported include scholarship funds, reforestation and habitat restoration, supporting first responders’ technical and training needs, and connecting area farms with local food banks. Right now, BrightNight is in that first step—working to understand which areas of the proposed project site are buildable and how to best use the land in harmony with natural resources. We’re still figuring out how the following steps will unfold, and will share more along the way. Overall, solar development carries us further along the path to a tribal-led renewable energy future—a future that provides for the community’s well-being by exercising tribal sovereignty and responsibly managing natural resources.

Thoughts on the governor’s first visit with the tribes

Earlier this year, after visiting Oregon’s 36 counties in her first year in office, Gov. Tina Kotek set out to visit each of Oregon’s nine federally recognized tribes. This month, some time after the last of those visits, Gov. Kotek and leaders of the tribes reflected on the experience and the work ahead to improve the state’s relationship with the sovereign nations within its borders. Gov. Kotek was the first Oregon governor to hire a full-time tribal affairs director, Shana McConville Radford, Umatilla, who during her career has worked in Warm Springs for the

tribes’ Health and Human Services. Gov. Kotek said that each of the nine recognized tribes spread throughout Oregon are very different, and she learned different things from each visit. She toured fish hatcheries with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, and Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians. She crafted tule duck decoys with children in the Burns Paiute tribe and visited a traditional Coquille cedar plank house. “Every visit was different, unique and instructive, specific to the tribe, and I just wish I could

Letters to the editor

A note from the museum

The Museum at Warm Springs 2024 end-of-year fundraising campaign is starting. Watch your mailboxes for the arrival of our 2024 end-of-year fundraising appeal (this year’s packet includes a special gift). We’ve had so many accomplishments this year but perhaps the most significant one was the long awaited-for replacement of our heating, ventilation and air conditioning system. We are so grateful to our major donors, which include: The Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, the U.S. National Park Service, Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the Roundhouse Foundation, the Ford Family Foundation, the Oregon Cultural Trust and PGE Foundation. This year, we also have also been preparing for the renewal of our aging Permanent Exhibit, the most popular attraction for visitors and an important way that the Warm Springs people tell our story to the world. A Permanent Exhibition community steering committee of the board of

directors and tribal members. The steerings committee members include Ruth ‘Pinky’ Beymer, Olney Patt Jr., Donald J. Stastny, Rain Circle, Edward Heath and Rosie Tom. The project will cost approximately \$3 million, and fundraising has begun in earnest! If you’re not already on our (snail) mailing list and would like to receive our end-of-year packet and gift, please let me know, and we’ll send one. Elizabeth Woody, executive director, Museum at Warm Springs. Send an email to: liz@museumatwarmsprings.org Or call (541) 553-3331, ext. 401. Another note: The museum is joining the Oregon Historical Society’s 2025 Reciprocal Membership program. For the second year in a row, we have been chosen to participate in the program. We will be offering reciprocal admission to our museum members in 2025. Our members can get free admission for themselves and three guests of any age to a different Oregon museum or cultural attraction each month.

November 30, 2024; Saturday

Headstone Dedication

Agency Cemetery 08:00am

&



Memorial For

“Pipsh”

Tony N. J. Lucei

11/07/1985 – 11/25/2023

10:00am

At Agency Longhouse

Spilyay Tymoo

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Native American Heritage Month: Acknowledgment, action

As we commemorate Native American Heritage Month during November, we reflect on the resilience and contributions of our Native American communities. This month serves as a powerful reminder of the deep history and rich cultures of Indigenous peoples, as well as the ongoing impact of historical injustices, including the legacy of Indian boarding schools. In a recent pivotal moment, President Biden issued a formal apology for the United States’ role in the Indian boarding school system: The aim of the system was to erase Indigenous identities and cultures. This acknowledgment marks a crucial step toward healing the wounds



The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition

inflicted by these policies. We recognize that true healing requires both recognition and action. This month, we call attention to S.1723/H.R. 7727 - the Truth and Healing Commission on Indian Boarding School Policies Act, currently under consideration. The time is now to take action to ensure its passage, allowing us to preserve the voices of survivors and their descendants to support their healing journey. Join us in advocating for future generations by contacting your Congressional representatives in Washington, D.C., to urge them to pass the Truth

and Healing Bill this year: boardingschoolhealing.org/advocacy/takeaction/ We also advocate for clemency for Leonard Peltier, a member of the Turtle Mountain Chippewa Tribe and a survivor of the Indian boarding school system, having attended Wahpeton Indian School from 1952 to 1955. Mr. Peltier, an Indigenous rights activist, has come to represent broader injustices experienced by Native American communities. Granting him clemency would be a meaningful step toward justice and a commitment to addressing historical wrongs.

As we celebrate the rich traditions, languages, and histories of Native American peoples this month, we must also confront the realities of our shared past. By honoring the voices of Indigenous communities and advocating for truth, justice, and healing, we can advance towards a future built on respect, understanding, and equity. Let us use this month as a catalyst for change, uniting in our commitment to support Indigenous rights and ensure that the lessons of the past inform a more just and equitable future for all. The National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition.