2026

Kittitas County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) Project

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

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Overview

Purpose Statement

A public engagement plan is a communication and project management document to guide project engagement efforts. This engagement plan has been developed for the Kittitas County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) project and outlines the following:

- ✓ Project Background and Engagement Approach
- ✓ Identified Interested and Impacted Parties
- ✓ Engagement Strategies, including related purposes and potential barriers,
- ✓ Engagement Schedule

Having an engagement plan is essential to:

- ✓ Clearly define the purpose of engagement,
- ✓ Identify who is involved,
- ✓ Determine what strategies will be used and why, and
- ✓ Outline when engagement strategies will occur.

Project Background

In Washington State, there are three permitting pathways for clean energy technologies:

1. Local government-led process,
2. Washington State Department of Ecology's Coordinated Clean Energy Permitting process, and
3. Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) process.

As part of state efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of clean energy permitting in Washington State, Kittitas County was a recipient of a Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) grant in 2026. The CESP grant program supports faster, more efficient, and equitable siting and permitting processes for clean energy projects while ensuring environmental protection, community engagement, and alignment with state climate and energy goals.

Through this grant-funded project, Kittitas County and Kimley-Horn staff will engage the Kittitas County community, elected officials, state and federal agencies, impacted communities, and tribes, incorporating what is heard into a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate current energy uses and permitting processes for solar, wind, geothermal, small modular reactors (SMR), and battery energy storage

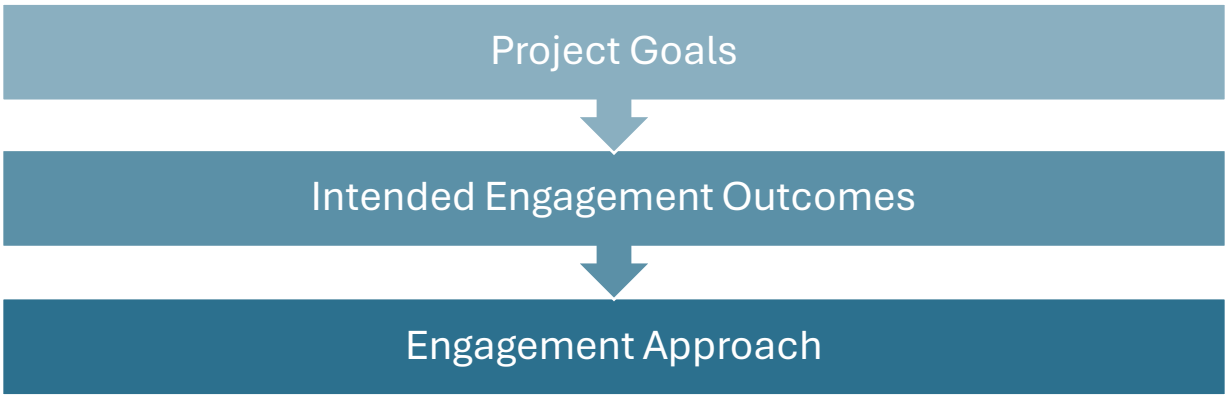
systems (BESS). Their input is crucial to County efforts to streamline its local permitting process for clean energy technologies.

Engagement Approach

As stated in the Project Charter, the Kittitas County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) project goals are to:

- Determine what clean energy types are most suitable for permitting.
- Retain local control of permitting in Kittitas County for identified energy projects.
- Develop and/or modify county code, where appropriate, so project applicants and the public understand where various uses may be appropriate, what studies and information is necessary to evaluate applications, and the types of mitigation which may be appropriate for energy projects that are proposed in Kittitas County.
- Where energy uses may be appropriate, create a streamlined permitting process.

To achieve the CESP project goals, engaging with the community, impacted parties, agencies, and tribes is essential to the decision-making process. Project goals define the purpose of engagement planning, establish intended outcomes, and guide the development of effective engagement approaches.



The intended engagement outcomes the project team hopes to achieve to support CESP project goals are to:

- **Understand community sentiment** on which clean energy types are most suitable and where they should be located.
- **Tailor the scope of the study**, including evaluating alternatives, potential impacts of concern, and potential mitigation measures.
- **Identify potential impacts and locations** that are of significant to communities, tribes, agencies, and other bodies.

- **Hear feedback** on local control measures, particularly if energy development pursues a state permitting pathway.

To achieve the intended engagement outcomes, the project team developed the following engagement approach:

- **Proactively engage with interested and affected parties**, aligned with specific project phases and objectives,
- **Listen to and incorporate input** from communities potentially impacted by utility-scale energy projects,
- **Maintain strong partnerships** between local, state, Tribal, and federal agencies on energy projects, and
- **Use community feedback** to assist the Board of County Commissioners as they evaluate siting options and code updates for utility scale energy projects.

Interested and Impacted Parties

Kittitas County has identified categories of key partners whose participation in the development of the Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Programmatic EIS is desired. It is important to note that even with the best intentions of the County to initially identify key partners that there are inevitably other parties, groups, organizations, and members of the public who are inadvertently not represented on the initial list, but whose participation is important. Kittitas County intends to bring these other individuals and parties into the process through a diversified public participation program.

The following categories and groups have been identified as parties to engage with as part of the public engagement process:

Table 1: Community Groups

Category	Name or Description
Elected and Appointed Officials	• Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners • Kittitas County Planning Commissioners
Local Districts and Departments	• Local Fire Districts including: Fire District 1, Kittitas Valley Fire and Rescue, Fire District 3, Fire District 4, Fire District 51, Fire District 6, and Fire District 7 • Kittitas County Public Works Department • Kittitas County Public Health Department • Kittitas County Noxious Weed Control Board
Federal Agencies	• Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service

Category	Name or Description
	• Department of Energy, Bonneville Power Administration • Department of Defense, Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse • Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration • Federal Communications Commission
State Agencies	• Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) • Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) • Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) • Washington Department of Commerce • Washington State Department of Ecology
Cities and Towns	• City of Roslyn • City of Cle Elum • Town of South Cle Elum • City of Kittitas • City of Ellensburg • Towns and CDPs in Kittitas County
Tribal Governments	• Yakama Nation • The Snoqualmie Indian Tribe • The Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation
Utility Groups and Providers	• Northwest Power and Conservation • Puget Sound Energy (PSE) • Kittitas Public Utility District
Agricultural Groups	• Kittitas County Farm Bureau • Cattlemen's Association • Kittitas County Conservation District
Environmental Groups	• Forterra • Kittitas Audubon • Kittitas Conservation Trust (KCT) • Washington Resource Conservation and Development Council • Kittitas County Field & Stream • Mountain to Sound Greenway Trust
Advocacy Groups	• Futurewise
Educational Institutions	• Central Washington University – specifically the Environmental Studies Department.
Economic Development	• Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce

Category	Name or Description
Realtors	• Kittitas County Association of Realtors
Impacted Communities	• Property Owners and Residents

Engagement Strategies

This public participation plan utilizes various strategies to best engage the public, stakeholders, tribes, elected officials, and harder to reach populations and those that traditionally face challenges in participating or do not participate.
This program focuses on the following strategies and purposes:

Inform: To provide balanced and objective information, assisting in understanding the subject matter, alternatives, and opportunities available. This ensures transparency and keeps everyone informed.
Consult: To seek and obtain feedback on analysis, alternatives, and decisions made during the project process. This helps incorporate diverse perspectives and provide check-in opportunities with decision makers.
Involve: To partner with parties ensuring concerns, processes, and resources are integrated and accounted for throughout the project. This level of engagement fosters collaboration and recognizes the unique expertise of the parties involved.

Table 2: Engagement Strategies

Strategy	Purpose	Description
Project Website and Story Map	Inform	To create and utilize a webpage dedicated to the project as a homebase for learning about the project and energy permitting in Kittitas County. Major announcements for events, documents, a project overview, and project schedule will be provided on this webpage. This webpage will be managed by Kittitas County throughout the project duration and after its completion. The County webpage will link to a story map where project specific information will be provided. This story map will provide additional project background, information on the selected energy uses, frequently asked questions, and project updates for the duration of the project. Materials will be translated as appropriate. The project story map will be created and maintained by Kimley-Horn.
Printed Materials	Inform	For all materials added to the project website, there will be a printable version for the County to print and provide at more remote locations. Providing digital and physical copies of project materials will allow for the most opportunity for education and engagement. To include: Flyer and mailer with a QR code to project website, Frequently Asked Questions, and Scoping Fact Sheet.
E-Newsletters	Inform	Leveraging existing listservs and the project website for additional interested persons, continuing E-Newsletters will provide a means of correspondence at key points in the project.
Social Media	Inform	Social media will be used in coordination with the County, local jurisdictions, and community groups to enhance collaboration and disseminate information and events to the public.

Strategy	Purpose	Description
Scoping Events	Inform and Consult	To be used as a resource for the public to learn about the project and help identify key issues, potential impacts, and community concerns before the project begins.
Draft EIS Open House	Inform and Consult	To provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the Environmental Impact Statement findings and provide comments. To include the preparation of up to eight project boards.
Stakeholder Workshops	Involve	Workshops with stakeholders across interest groups and agencies will be held one-on-one and in small group meetings to share information and hear opportunities and concerns from interested and impacted parties.
Tribal Roundtables	Involve	Roundtable meetings with tribal staff will be used to discuss planning efforts, opportunities, and any concerns relating to the siting or permitting of energy projects in the County.
Planning Commission Briefings/Hearings	Inform and Consult	At key points in the project, Kimley-Horn will attend Planning Commission meetings for discussion and participation. A joint briefing with the BOCC is anticipated for Spring 2026 with hearings anticipated for 2027.
Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) Briefings/Hearings	Inform and Consult	At key milestones, attendance at briefings with the BOCC will be scheduled to provide project updates to ensure the project is proceeding in the preferred and anticipated direction. A joint briefing with the Planning Commission is anticipated for Spring 2026 with additional briefings to be scheduled as the project progresses in 2026. Hearings are anticipated for 2027.

Public Engagement Opportunities

Key public engagement opportunities include informing and consulting the public during the scoping period, the issuance of the Draft EIS, public briefing and hearings, and through the project website.

Stakeholder Engagement Opportunities

Workshops will be held with private, non-profit, academic, and governmental subject matter experts spanning the energy, environmental, agricultural, real estate, and safety fields as identified in Table 1 to provide opportunities for collaboration including knowledge and resource sharing. These workshops will be held between the scoping period and draft EIS issuance to help inform the site selection process, the writing of the draft EIS, and development code changes.

Tribal Coordination

As part of the engagement process, Kittitas County will reach out to local Tribes to inform them about the County's project and related goals, seek input in the energy types being studied, and coordinate to ensure consistency and efficiency in related planning efforts. The goal of this coordination effort is to maintain and continue growing relationships with local Tribes and to seek their input on potential site selection and mitigation upfront to include in the draft EIS and development code updates. The county will arrange roundtable meetings with Tribal staff to provide an opportunity for collaboration as part of this process and to continue relationships.

Agency Coordination

The County will coordinate with federal and state agencies throughout the draft EIS and final EIS process (as applicable to understand site constraints), hear input across jurisdictions, and exchange resources such as current tools and studies as part of the draft EIS and development code updates.

Coordination with agencies ensures consistency between Kittitas County, state, and federal planning efforts as well as promoting compliance with the Growth Management Act.

Impacted Communities

Impacted Communities are intended to include the individuals and/or groups who have experienced or may experience future impacts from the development of energy projects within Kittitas County. This includes the potential impacts relating to living, working, or recreating near facilities. The goal of this outreach is to learn the concerns of potentially impacted parties and discuss potential mitigation measures to address any concerns about potential impacts.

Outreach to Impacted Communities is to be conducted once site selection areas are known.

Potential Public Engagement Barriers and Proposed Mitigation

While the CESP Project Charter identifies project risks and mitigation measures overall, the engagement plan provides identification of potential barriers and mitigation specific to community engagement efforts. The project team has identified potential public engagement challenges to proactively identify areas where community engagement may face barriers to meaningful engagement. The project team has identified the following potential challenges and strategies to mitigate potential challenges:

- **Strong proponents for and against**. There is the potential that public engagement could be dominated by strong proponents for or against the subject matter overall, specifically during meetings, hearings, and comment periods. With clean energy being politically charged subject matter at times, there are possibilities that commentary swings from extremes and could dilute more moderate public opinions as well as specific discussions focused on siting and permitting details.
    - **Mitigation**: By establishing early, clear, and effective communication messaging surrounding what the project is and is not and proactively creating opportunities – such as stakeholder workshops – for interested parties outside of traditional public meetings and comment periods, the County will address the concerns of invested parties without overshadowing spaces for the public at large.

- **Varied perspectives and priorities.** It is anticipated that the County will meet with and receive comments from individuals and groups with a range of backgrounds with diverse priorities. There is the potential that these lived experiences, priorities, and related values may differ and create potential communication barriers.
    - **Mitigation:** To navigate diverse perspectives in community engagement, the project team has identified key stakeholder groups early, plans to meet with groups to understand key priorities, will ask specific questions to understand core values, and will work to find common shared goals and approaches going forward.

- **Environmental concerns**. Agencies and environmental groups are likely to raise concerns about the impacts of various energy uses on Kittitas County's natural, built, and social environments. These impacts may include effects on the shrub steppe ecosystem, wildlife species, geological features, noise generation, and public services.
    - **Mitigation:** Clear communication upfront. One of the project goals is to understand the concerns of various energy uses, siting locations, and potential impacts. Hearing from agencies and groups alike aids in this

process. The EIS will study the impacts different energy uses to guide paths forward for a direct and effective permitting approach.

- **Potential project scope and local control confusion.** The project's scope provides an exploratory lens of energy uses (wind, solar, BESS, geothermal, and SMR) and their related impacts across the County. This scope runs the potential for misinterpretation of the County's intent regarding its permittance in the County. Additionally, there may be confusion as to the County's authority in the energy permitting process with state and federal authorities that can bypass local control.
    - **Mitigation:** Providing clear concise messaging and frequently asked questions documentation on the scope of the study and the current permitting process will assist in mitigating potential confusion. This resource may be added to as the project progresses and be located on the project webpage for easy access. Individuals can be redirected to these resources as confusion arises to ensure clarity is provided.

- **Time commitment and schedule conflicts.** To be able to provide commentary or attend meetings, it requires schedule flexibility and access to resources that not all individuals possess. Individuals who may not have flexibility, adequate resources, and/or do not feel as strongly on the subject may be less inclined to attend or provide comments.
    - **Mitigation:** To reduce time and scheduling barriers, the County is providing a project website to provide an overview of the project and when key engagement periods, such as open houses, public meetings and hearings, and comment periods, are planned. Additionally, the project team will employ intentional outreach, strategic event scheduling, and online/virtual options. Event scheduling will take into consideration days and times that avoid conflicts with work, school, and community activities, and offer online comment forms for ease of participation.

Engagement Schedule

Engagement is an ongoing activity throughout the project's lifetime; however, the specific objectives, audiences, engagement strategies and opportunities described above will fluctuate through the project's progression. As such, the public participation process is broken down by phases that correspond to the project steps to produce the Final EIS and Development Code changes. It is important to note that some of these phases may overlap.

- **Project Kickoff**
  - Joint Briefing with elected and appointed officials
- **Scoping Period**
  - Scoping Events
- **Targeted Outreach**
  - Stakeholder Workshops
  - Tribal Roundtables
- **Draft EIS Issuance**
  - Draft EIS Open House
- **Development Regulations**
  - Public Hearings and Meetings

Ongoing engagement includes updating the project website during the above phases, social media and advertising, updates to the Board of County Commissioners, and coordination with state and federal agencies.

The schedule below provides an overview of when each engagement phase and strategy will occur with further phase breakdowns to follow.

Kittitas County CESP Project			2026										2027					
			Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
Engagement	**Mar-26**	**Jun-27**		*	*	x					x					*	*	*	*
Scoping Comment Period	Mid Apr-26	Mid May-26																	
Scoping Events	Early May-26	Early May-26				x													
Stakeholder Workshops	Apr-26	Sept-26																	
Tribal Roundtables	Apr-26	Jul-26																	
Informational Tabling at Community Events	Apr-26	Sept-26																	
Draft EIS Comment Period	Oct-26	Nov-26																	
Draft EIS Open House	Mid Oct-26	Mid Oct-26									x								
PC Briefings	Mar-27	May-27			* joint briefing											*	*		
BOCC Briefings	Mar-26	June-27		*														*	*

Project Kickoff

Engagement during the project kickoff phase includes checking in with the Board of County Commissioners and planning the engagement process. This includes the development of the engagement plan.

- **Engagement Objectives:** Develop engagement plan.
- **Timeframe:** February to March 2026
- **Public participation opportunities:** Joint Planning Commission and Board of County Commissioners briefing attendance.

Scoping Period

Engagement during the scoping period includes taking online and written comments during the scoping comment period, tabling, and holding informational events. These opportunities intend to inform members of the public, agencies, Tribes, and other parties of the project's determination of significance and solicit feedback on the impacts that the Environmental Impact Statement should study. This includes the elements of the environment being considered and any early concerns, feedback, or recommendations.

- **Engagement Objectives:** Inform public about project and provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the scope of the EIS, elements of the environment to be studies, and alternatives to be included.
- **Timeframe:** April to May 2026
- **Public participation opportunities:** Submit scoping comments and attend the scoping events.

Targeted Outreach: Stakeholder Workshops and Tribal Roundtables

In the Spring to Fall of 2026, while the EIS is being drafted, targeted engagement efforts will focus on meeting with stakeholders across interest groups, Tribal staff, and impacted communities to understand priorities, concerns, and exchange information and resources. During this time, briefings with the Board of County Commissioners will also be attended to provide status updates as the project progresses. County staff may table at community events during this time to provide information to the public as the project progresses and to promote the draft EIS issuance and related open house event.

- **Engagement Objectives:** Learn siting and permitting process priorities from stakeholders, Tribes, and impacted communities to draft EIS and development regulations. Priorities may include specific areas to avoid, preferred mitigation measures. Keep the Board of County Commissioners and public informed as the EIS is written.
- **Timeframe:** April to September 2026

- **Public participation opportunities:** Workshops, roundtables, and Board of County Commissioner briefings.

Draft EIS Issuance

When the draft EIS is issued, engagement will shift to the draft EIS comment period and draft EIS open house. The purpose of these opportunities is to share the information analyzed as part of the EIS and to receive feedback from the public, Tribes, agencies, and impacted communities on the alternatives and their related impacts to help inform the decision-making process.

- **Objectives:** Share the draft EIS and receive comments for the final EIS.
- **Timeframe:** October to November 2026
- **Public participation opportunities**: Submit draft EIS comments and attend the draft EIS Open House.

After the draft EIS comment period ends, comments will be summarized, and a Final EIS will be issued. This Final EIS informs the decision-making process of the related development code changes.

Development Code Changes

As part of the energy siting and permitting project, development code changes are to be guided by the impacts, mitigation, and community feedback provided during the scoping, partner engagement, and draft EIS phases. During the development code phase, public engagement focuses on ongoing briefings and hearings with the Planning Commission (PC) and Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) and the final adoption proceedings. With these meetings being publicly available opportunities, they create spaces for members of the public, impacted communities, and interested parties to provide written and oral comments and testimony at hearings as the development code changes progress through their drafting and final adoption process.

- **Objectives:** Draft and adopt the final development code with input from the public and impacted communities.
- **Timeframe:** July 2026 to June 2027
- **Public participation opportunities:** Submit and/or provide comments at Planning Commission (PC)and Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) briefings and hearings.