Kittitas County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting Project

EIS Scoping Comment Summary | June 2026

Introduction

Kittitas County is completing a programmatic Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to evaluate potential impacts and appropriate areas within Kittitas County for siting utility-scale solar, utility-scale wind, geothermal energy, small modular reactors, and battery energy storage systems (BESS). The following document summarizes the comments received during the Kittitas County Clean Energy Siting and Permitting (CESP) Project EIS scoping comment period.

The scoping comment period was open for 33 days from **April 16 to May 18, 2026.** The County invited comment on the following topics:

- EIS alternatives which should be considered,
- EIS elements of the environment,
- Concerns about impacts,
- Minimization and mitigation measures, and
- Licenses or other approvals that may be required.

Interested parties could provide comments in the following ways:

Online Comments were submitted via email to cleanenergy@co.kittitas.wa.us with the subject line: “EIS Scoping Comment”

Written Comments were submitted via mail to the following address**:**

Reference:	Clean Energy Siting and Permitting EIS Scoping Comment
To:	Kittitas County Community Development Services
Address:	411 N Ruby ST, Suite 2 Ellensburg WA 98926

Two in-person scoping events were held during the comment period on May 2, 2026, one in Ellensburg and one in Cle Elum. The project team invited the community to attend the scoping events and spoke to approximately 80 individuals. These events provided an opportunity for individuals to learn about the project and EIS scoping process. Scoping comment forms were provided at these events, but no completed

forms were received. No official verbal testimony was collected at these events. For more information on the Scoping Events, please visit the Scoping Event Summary.

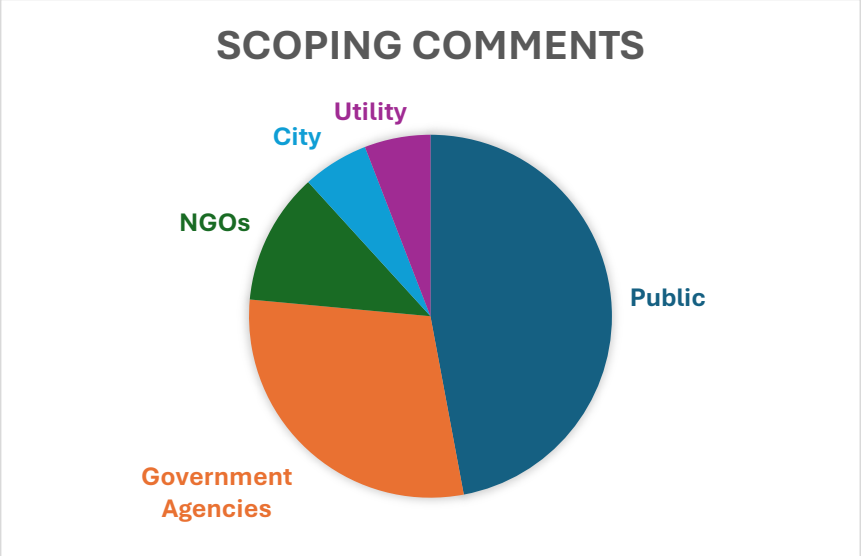
Respondents

At the close of the CESP Project scoping comment period, **Kittitas County received 19 comments from 17 respondents.**

As shown in Figure 1 to the right, the respondents included:

- Eight members of the public,
- Five government agencies,
- Two non-governmental organizations,
- One city, and
- One private utility provider.

Figure 1: Scoping Comment Respondents



No Tribal representatives submitted comments during the scoping comment period. Additional follow-up is planned.

Overall Comment Themes

Overall, scoping comments revealed key themes as it relates to the proposed EIS alternatives, energy siting criteria, the various elements of the environment, and the CESP Project process. The key themes heard from scoping comments include:

- Early Support for Alternative 2
- Focus on Dual-Use Practices with Agricultural Lands
- Prioritize Suitable Site Criteria
- Concern About Alternative 3
- Safeguards for Environmental Resources

Align with State Efforts and Resources

EIS Alternatives

Overview

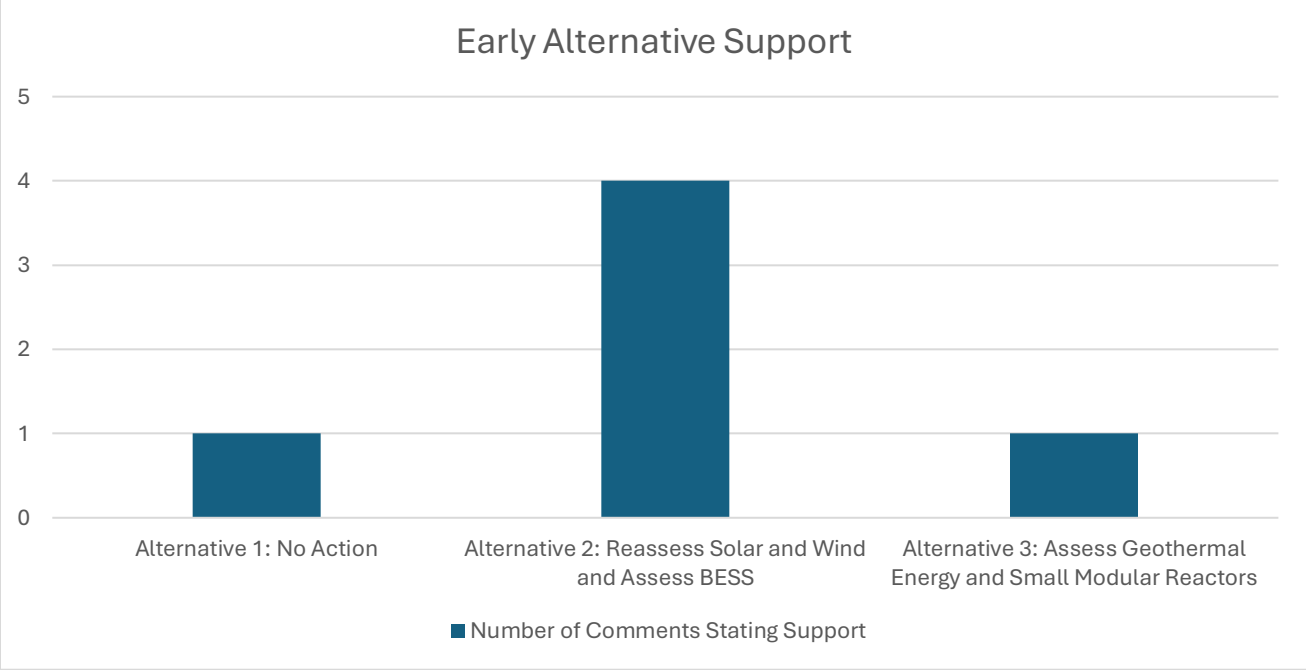
In the April 16, 2026, Scoping Notice, three alternatives were proposed for public comment. These alternatives included:

- **Alternative #1:** No Action Alternative.
- **Alternative #2:** Reassess siting of utility-scale solar and wind and evaluate battery energy storage facilities.
- **Alternative #3:** Evaluate siting criteria for geothermal energy facilities and small modular nuclear facilities.[1]

Comments during the scoping comment period help shape the alternatives to be studied as part of the EIS process. Comments could state early support or concerns for certain alternatives, share input for revisions to proposed alternatives, and provide additional information and studies.

Of the alternatives proposed in the CESP Project EIS Scoping Notice, **Alternative 2 received the most mentions of early support.**

Figure 2: Alternative Support Comparison from Scoping Comments



[1] *At the time of the CESP EIS scoping comment period, there was not a state or federal definition for the term "small modular reactors".*

As shown in Figure 2 above, four comments stated support for Alternative 2, including Puget Sound Energy (PSE). Alternative 1, the No Action Alternative, received one comment in support with a minor modification relating to the solar overlay zone. Alternative 3 also received one comment in support, though expressed discomfort for small modular reactors without knowing more. Additional comments were also provided for modifications to the alternatives proposed.

Alternative 2

Comments on Alternative 2 emphasized the need to re-evaluate existing overlay zones and permitting processes, aiming for a more balanced and flexible approach to energy development.

The Kittitas Audubon Society advocated for the expansion of large-scale solar, wind, and BESS, utilizing least-conflict siting resources. They also stressed that productive agricultural land does not necessarily exclude renewable energy siting and can support dual use.

Puget Sound Energy (PSE) expressed hope for greater clarity and flexibility in new energy development relating to Alternative 2, ensuring existing overlays are not restricted and consider co-existence with agriculture, recreation, and environmental uses. They highlighted BESS as a key tool for grid stability, peak demand management, and outage response, recommending national safety standards and zoning regulation guidance for effective deployment.

Public comments supported the expansion of solar, wind, and BESS but raised concerns about the current solar overlay map. Commentors expressed concerns that the existing overlay maps have the potential to push clean energy development into the County's outskirts and rural lands, impacting sensitive shrub steppe habitats and wildlife corridors. Recommendations for Alternative 2 included prioritizing uses on already developed or dual-use areas, where temporary projects can coexist and offer co-benefits with existing uses.

Alternative 3

Regarding Alternative 3, concerns around small modular reactors and additional insights into geothermal energy facilities were shared.

- Three individuals stated concerns regarding the unknowns and environmental impacts of small modular reactors.
- Two state agencies provided additional information and resources for geothermal energy facilities.

The Washington State Department of Ecology shared the geothermal collaborative process resource and offered assistance for the CESP Project efforts.

The Washington State Department of Natural Resources (WA DNR) stated that Kittitas County is not likely to produce megawatt scale power based on their current knowledge of geothermal energy. Unconventional sources are unproven, may need to be constructed very deep, and have the potential to involve fracking.

Additional Commentary on Alternatives

Two comments shared support for the reassessment of the solar overlay zones, one comment citing Solar Overlay Zone 1 as potentially too restrictive with its agricultural lands criteria and the other comment discussing solar canopies over areas such as parking lots.

Additionally, four comments requested consideration of dual use of agricultural lands for energy uses as part of the alternatives selected, mainly specifying solar facilities for dual use, also known as “agrivoltaics”.

Next Steps for EIS Alternatives

To address the comments on the EIS alternatives, the following actions have been identified:

- ✓ Refine the EIS alternatives to incorporate feedback from scoping comments.
- ✓ Summarize selected alternatives in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Energy Siting Comments and Resources

Outside of the EIS Alternatives, comments provided initial feedback on energy siting in the County.

Areas of Siting Opportunity

Respondents identified potential areas for further research or consideration as part of assessing suitable areas within the county for energy siting. These areas included:

- Developed areas such as large parking lots and large rooftops,
- Small or irregular shaped agricultural lands not productive for commercial agriculture use, and
- Dual use of agricultural lands for solar and wind facilities.

Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) provided their Guidelines for Utility-Scale Solar and Onshore Wind Energy Development in Washington State, which includes information on favorable site criteria.

Areas to Avoid or Exclude

Wildlife habitats were the most referred to areas to avoid potential impacts as it relates to energy siting and development pressures.

Specific locations in the County that commenters suggested to avoid included:

Figure 3: Unfavorable Areas and Resources

Identified Areas	Resources
Priority habitats, including: • Biodiversity areas and corridors, • Shrub steppe habitats, • "Important Bird Areas", and • Riparian habitats.	Washington State University (WSU) Least Conflict Solar Siting WDFW Guidelines for Utility-Scale Solar and Onshore Wind Energy Development WDFW Mapping for Priority Habitats and Species Washington Shrubsteppe Restoration and Resiliency Initiative Maps Washington Habitat Connectivity Plan Spatial Data
Military Airspace	See Northwest Training Range Complex Comment
Commercial agricultural lands	See WSU Least Conflict Solar Siting
Parks and open spaces	No Resources Provided

Next Steps for Siting Energy Uses

To address the comments on energy siting, the following actions have been identified:

- ✓ Analyze energy impacts, review resources, and establish siting criteria tailored to Kittitas County.

Elements of the Environment

The table below provides a breakdown of the specific topics mentioned as it relates to the scoped elements of the environment and who provided commentary.

Figure 4: Comments on the Elements of the Environment

Element of the Environment	Summarized Topics	Related Commenter/s
Water Resources	**Public Water Systems:** If future developments provide water, determine whether the water provided meets the definition of public water system. **Groundwater Quantity and Quality Protections:** Specific considerations for the protection of groundwater resources, particularly relating to geothermal energy. **Water Use and Potential Consumption:** Evaluation of water use and potential consumption across all energy facilities, especially for small modular reactors.	• Washington State Department of Health - Office of Drinking Water • 2 Members of the Public
Biological Resources	**Resource Mapping and Data:** Utilize habitat mapping resources provided as part of EIS analysis. **Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat Impact Mitigation:** Protect wildlife habitats, especially shrub steppe as a priority habitat. Address the potential loss of wildlife habitat areas due to development, considering both winter and summer ranges.	• WDFW • Conservation Northwest • 3 Members of the Public, including an Environmental Studies Director
Environmental Health and Safety	**Fire Risk and Wildfire Management:** Address fire risk and wildfire management associated with transmission and distribution lines. Incorporate mitigation strategies that consider transmission locations, maintenance, and proactive wildfire risk management measures.	• Conservation Northwest (Wildfire Management) • Kittitas Audubon Society (SMR Concerns) • 4 Members of the Public

Element of the Environment	Summarized Topics	Related Commenter/s
	Small Modular Reactor Concerns: Evaluate safety and potential environmental damage associated with the use of small nuclear facilities. **Noise Levels and Mitigation:** Assess noise levels across all energy uses and develop appropriate mitigation strategies.	
Land Use	**Military Considerations:** Incorporate routes provided for military training and special airspace at and below 1,000 feet into location criteria. **Agricultural Land Protection:** Minimize adverse impacts on agricultural land. Explore enhancement opportunities through co-benefits and dual use of lands. **Land Management:** Note land status, such as under trust of DNR, as part of the land use considerations. Consult with the City of Ellensburg regarding any Ellensburg UGA land use changes.	• Northwest Training Range Complex • WA DNR • City of Ellensburg • Kittitas Audubon Society • Conservation Northwest • PSE
Visual Quality	**Light and Glare:** Reduce potential light and glare to the greatest extent possible.	• 1 Member of the Public
Other Topics Not Scoped	**Tax Incentives:** Explore potential tax incentives to encourage solar installation. **Local Workforce Benefits:** Explore opportunities for economic growth by job creation.	• 1 Member of the Public

To address comments on the elements of the environment, the following actions have been identified:

- ✓ Integrate the environment topics into the DEIS outline and study parameters, outlining how they are addressed.

Comments on the CESP Project Process

Three comments addressed the overall CESP Project process and had specific requests.

- The Washington State Department of Ecology shared the need to ensure consistency with and reference to the programmatic environmental impact statements (PEIS) developed by the Department of Ecology for utility-scale wind and utility-scale solar facilities.
- A separate comment requested meaningful community and Tribal engagement throughout the project, as well as any updates to maps, codes, or policies associated with this effort.
- Lastly, the County notes the consultation request by the City of Ellensburg should there be any discussion surrounding changes in the unincorporated Ellensburg urban growth area per the interlocal agreement between the City of Ellensburg and the County.

To address comments on the CESP Project process, the following actions have been identified:

- ✓ Align the County's siting and permitting approach with the Department of Ecology's PEIS for utility-scale solar and wind.
- ✓ Engage stakeholders and Tribal representatives with follow up questions and discussions.

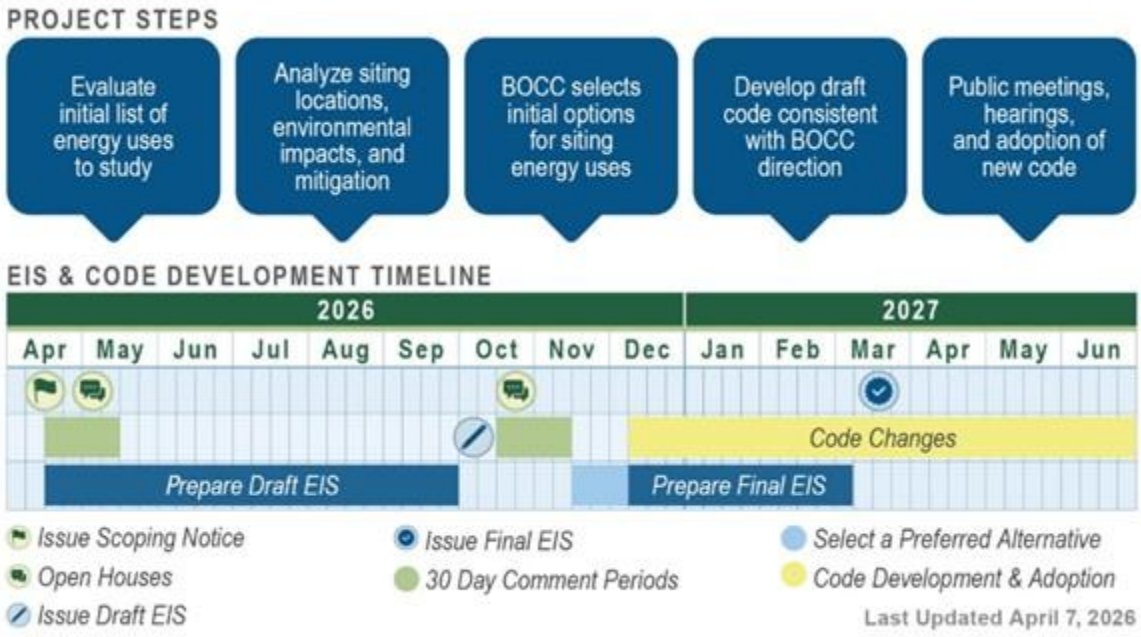
Summary of Next Steps

Kittitas County will use the scoping comments and the actions identified in this summary to update the proposed approach of the EIS analysis. A complete list of the identified actions is included below:

- ✓ Refine the EIS alternatives, incorporating feedback from scoping comments.
- ✓ Summarize selected alternatives in the DEIS.
- ✓ Analyze energy siting impacts, review resources, and establish siting criteria tailored to Kittitas County.
- ✓ Integrate the environment topics into the DEIS outline and study parameters, outlining how they are addressed.
- ✓ Align the County's siting and permitting approach with the Department of Ecology's PEIS for utility-scale solar and wind.

- ✓ Engage stakeholders and Tribal representatives with follow up questions and discussions.

From here, the County will begin the next step of the CESP Project, including additional meetings with stakeholders and Tribes anticipated for Summer 2026, with the Draft EIS anticipated for Fall 2026.



The Clean Energy Siting and Permitting CESP-CLEANENERGY25 RFA is supported with funding from Washington's Climate Commitment Act. The CCA supports Washington's climate action efforts by putting cap-and-invest dollars to work reducing climate pollution, creating jobs, and improving public health. Information about the CCA is available at www.climate.wa.gov.

List of Appendices

Appendix A: CESP Scoping Comment Index

Appendix B: CESP Scoping Comments Master File