

Rural Energy Academy Peer Exchange

December 1-3, 2025

Gilliam, Sherman and Wasco Counties, Ore.



**Rural Energy
Academy**

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1

Portland International Airport (PDX) | 7000 NE Airport Way Portland, Ore. 97218

All participants will share one of two private shuttle buses to the event hotel unless alternate plans have been coordinated ahead of time. If your flight is delayed or if you have any travel difficulties, please call NACo Program Manager Blake Gardiner.

12:50 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. **First Shuttle from PDX** (1.5-hour travel)

After retrieving your luggage, meet NACo Staff at the north information booth located between carousel 8 and 9 for loading and departure promptly at 12:50 p.m.

3:50 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. **Second Shuttle from PDX** (1.5-hour travel)

After retrieving your luggage, meet NACo Staff at the north information booth located between carousel 8 and 9 for loading and departure promptly at 3:50 p.m.

Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center | 3223 Bret Clodfelter Way, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

6:00 p.m. – 6:30 p.m. **Meet in Hotel Lobby and Depart for Reception Dinner** (15-minute travel)

Participants should meet in the hotel lobby no later than 6:00 p.m. to depart for dinner. The shuttle will leave promptly at 6:15 p.m.

Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum | 5000 Discovery Drive, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

6:30 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. **Reception Dinner**

Participants are invited to network with fellow attendees and explore exhibits. Dinner will take place against the backdrop of the Columbia River.

- **Hon. Phil Brady**, Commissioner, Wasco County, Ore.
- **Hon. Joe Dabulskis**, Judge, Sherman County, Ore.
- **Hon. Lena Fowler**, Supervisor, Coconino County, Ariz.; Rural Energy Academy Advisor
- **Blake Gardiner**, Program Manager, Clean Energy, NACo
- **Ashleigh Holand**, Chief Program Officer, NACo
- **Hon. Cris Patnode**, Judge, Gilliam County, Ore.

Rural Energy Academy Peer Exchange Gilliam, Sherman and Wasco Counties, Ore.

8:15 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. **Depart to Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center** (15-minute travel)
Participants should be ready to leave no later than 8:15 p.m. to depart for the hotel. The shuttle will leave promptly at 8:30 p.m.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2

Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center | 3223 Bret Clodfelter Way, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

7:15 a.m. – 8:15 a.m. **Breakfast Buffet and Network**
*Columbia River Hotel
Ballroom*

Participants are encouraged to eat breakfast and network. Participants will be asked to complete a one question survey that will inform an activity later in the day. NACo staff will pass out county-specific sample energy profiles to each participant. At the end of the day, participants are encouraged to write comments or feedback on how to make the profile most useful.

8:15 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. **Meet in Hotel Lobby and Depart for Pachwáywit Fields** (1.25-hour travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to the Pachwáywit fields solar facility. The shuttle will leave promptly at 8:30 a.m.

Pachwáywit Fields | 18727 Bottemiller Lane, Arlington, Ore. 97812

9:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. **Solar and Stewardship: Pachwáywit Fields Visit with Avangrid**

Participants will visit the Pachwáywit Field solar site to experience the largest operating solar project in Oregon and observe the scale, footprint and technology up close. County leaders will learn how large-scale solar projects are integrated and managed, including land stewardship practices like seasonal grazing.

- **Beau Davidson**, Pachwáywit Field Site Supervisor, Avangrid
- **Cameron Krebs**, Rancher, Krebs Solar Grazing

10:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. **Break and Depart for Leaning Juniper II Meeting Site** (15-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to the Operations and Maintenance facility at the Leaning Juniper II wind farm.

Leaning Juniper II | 72766 Rattlesnake Road, Arlington, Ore. 97812

10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Wind and Solar in Context: Leaning Juniper II Wind Farm with Avangrid

Participants will receive a technical overview of wind and solar energy development in the region covering elements of early project development, operations and decommissioning and repowering. Following each topic, counties are encouraged to participate in a brief Q&A with the site hosts. The session will conclude with a short visit to a neighboring string of recently repowered wind turbines.

- **Darren Cavanaugh**, Senior Business Development Manager, Avangrid
- **Mark Eilers**, Senior Business Development Director, Avangrid
- **Mitch Grumbles**, Leaning Juniper IIA Plant Manager, Avangrid
- **Tom Pochardt**, Regional Director of Operations, Avangrid
- **Paul Violante**, Senior Business Developer, Avangrid

11:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m. Depart for Lunch at The Dirty Cowgirl Saloon (45-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to The Dirty Cowgirl Saloon for lunch.

The Dirty Cowgirl Saloon | 1214 Clark Street, Wasco, Ore. 97065

12:15 p.m. – 1:30 p.m. Networking Lunch

1:30 p.m. – 1:45 p.m. Depart for Avangrid National Training Center (15-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus after lunch to attend the next site visit at Avangrid National Training Center.

Avangrid National Training Facility | 99741 Base Line Road, Moro, Ore. 97039

1:45 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Walking Tour of Avangrid National Training Center

Participants will tour Avangrid’s National Training Facility and get an up-close view of tools, equipment and training environment used in utility-scale wind and solar operations. This will offer an inside look at how technicians practice maintenance tasks, safety procedures and equipment troubleshooting. Counties will better understand the leading technology behind energy projects and the specialized workforce required to support them.

- **Sam Akey**, National Training Center Manager, Avangrid
- **Paul Violante**, Senior Business Developer, Avangrid

2:30 p.m. – 3:15 p.m. Break and Depart for Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center (45-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to event hotel to conduct afternoon programming.

Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center | 3223 Bret Clodfelter Way, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Break

3:30 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.

Panel and Q&A with County Practitioners

Participants will hear from regional county leaders and advocates who work directly at the intersection of local government, community priorities and energy. Panelists will share practical insights from their work with local governments, highlight considerations that strengthen the county voice during major project discussions and discuss lessons learned and successes in the region. The session will conclude with an open Q&A.

- **Moderator: Blake Gardiner**, Program Manager, Clean Energy, NACo
- **Hon. Joe Dabulskis**, Judge, Sherman County, Ore.
- **Hon. Michael McArthur**, Executive Director, Community Renewable Energy Association; Former Sherman County Judge; Former Association of Oregon Counties Executive Director
- **Branden Pursinger**, Legislative Affairs Manager, Association of Oregon Counties
- **Hon. David Senjem**, Commissioner, Olmsted County, Minn.; Rural Energy Academy Advisor

4:15 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Closing Activity, Wrap-up Conversation

Participants will break out into groups to develop peer-generated questions, apply collaborative problem-solving and share best practices.

- **Blake Gardiner**, Program Manager, Clean Energy, NACo

5:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

Break

6:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.

(Optional) Dinner on Your Own

Shuttles to The Dalles downtown will be available starting at 6:00 p.m. and running every 30 minutes for participants to enjoy dinner with peers at a restaurant of their choice. Shuttles will run to central drop-off points on East 2nd Street where a variety of restaurants are available to explore. For those who would prefer to stay at the hotel, the Portage Grill is located onsite and open until 11:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 3

Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center | 3223 Bret Clodfelter Way, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

7:15 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.

*Columbia River Hotel
Ballroom*

Breakfast and Networking

Participants are encouraged to eat breakfast and network. Participants who will be departing for Portland International Airport (PDX) on Wednesday should bring their luggage to the hotel concierge for storage and quick access when the event concludes.

8:30 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

Meet at Hotel Lobby and Depart for Columbia Gorge Community College (15-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to Columbia Gorge Community College. The shuttle will leave promptly at 8:30 a.m.

Columbia Gorge Community College | 400 E Scenic Dr, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

8:45 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.

Supporting a Regional Energy Workforce: Columbia Gorge Community College

Participants will visit the Columbia Gorge Community College to learn about its Electro-Mechanical Technology program and tour the applied learning facilities that prepare students for careers in energy technologies. The session will outline how the college develops hands-on workforce pathways that are tailored to regional energy industry needs while also providing insight on workforce readiness in emerging energy sectors.

- **Jim Pytel**, Electro-Mechanical Technology Instructor; Career and Technical Education co-chair

9:45 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Break

10:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Data Centers 101

Participants will learn from Google about the basics of data centers and how they relate to local planning and energy systems. The presentation will cover fundamentals of data centers, energy procurement and how Google engages with counties on infrastructure needs, incentives and other community considerations. The session will include time for questions before participants transition to the site tour.

- **Kate Franko**, Public Affairs, Google
- **Erik Soballe**, Site Lead, Google
- **Ashley Yun**, Economic Development, Google

10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m. Depart for Google Data Center Campus (15-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to The Dalles Google Data Center.

The Dalles Google Data Center | 3100 Columbia Road, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

10:45 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. Tour of The Dalles Google Data Center

Participants will tour the Google Data Center facility, and staff will highlight the main functions and on-site operations of a data center. Participants will gain a stronger understanding of how data centers fit within the context of local energy and infrastructure systems.

- **Kate Franko**, Public Affairs, Google
- **Erik Soballe**, Site Lead, Google
- **Ashley Yun**, Economic Development, Google

11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m. Break and Depart to Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center
(15-minute travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to the event hotel to debrief.

Columbia River Hotel & Conference Center | 3223 Bret Clodfelter Way, The Dalles, Ore. 97058

11:45 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Session Conclusion: Event Debrief and Next Steps

*Columbia River Hotel
Ballroom*

Participants will reconvene for a facilitated closing conversation to reflect on the peer exchange and share key takeaways. Participants are encouraged to highlight what stood out, new ideas they may look to apply in their own communities and new questions they plan to explore.

12:30 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. Prepare for Airport Departure

Participants will gather luggage and load the airport shuttle bus.

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m. Board Airport Shuttle and Depart to PDX (1.5 hour travel)

Participants will travel by shuttle bus to PDX to arrive at the airport at 2:30 p.m.

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