

Solar and Farmland in Oregon

Oregon's Exclusive Farm Use (EFU) zone covers over **16 million acres statewide** — around 26% of Oregon's total land base — and is the state's primary designation for protected agricultural land. Today's **utility-scale solar energy** facilities occupy only a **small fraction** of EFU acreage.

What are EFU Lands?

“Exclusive Farm Use” zoning was established through the state’s land-use planning program as a way to prevent urban sprawl and protect agricultural lands. Statewide Planning Goal 3, adopted in 1974, requires counties to identify and protect agricultural lands through comprehensive planning and zoning.

The 2022 Farm & Forest Report notes that 99% of the land zoned EFU in 1987 (16.1 million acres) remains under EFU zoning today.

Top Solar Generating Counties in Oregon

Oregon County	MW Production	MW Acreage as a % of EFU Acreage
Wasco	211.7	0.17%
Crook	166.3	0.13%
Gilliam	162	0.14%
Klamath	137.8	0.20%
Lake	121.6	0.07%

Even in the counties with the highest solar generation, solar facilities occupy less than a quarter of one percent of that county's EFU-zoned acreage.



Why do solar projects end up on agricultural land?

The physical characteristics of farmland make it well-suited for solar development — it is leveled, drained, and fenced. More importantly, farmland comes with key development and infrastructure advantages:

- Agricultural lands tends to have **fewer conflicts with wildlife habitat and other environmental or cultural resources**.
- Established agricultural operations have attracted power lines, substations, and roads. These are **transmission assets that significantly lower the cost and permitting complexity** of connecting energy generation to the electric grid, which lowers the price of energy for consumers.

All of this means that when utility-scale solar and wind projects need many acres of flat, cleared, transmission-adjacent land, agricultural lands are over-represented. Not because developers are choosing farms over better alternatives, but because **agricultural land is very common and well-suited for the role of hosting renewable energy projects**.

Current Projects at EFSC

Projecting forward — this chart shows what EFU land use would look like if all projects currently “Approved”, “Under Review”, or “Proposed” by Oregon’s Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) were built. Together, these represent the majority of the solar land use expected in Oregon over the next decade.

For Oregon to meet its clean energy mandates, up to an estimated **0.52% of EFU** land statewide would need to host solar projects. This represents about **0.13% of Oregon’s entire land footprint**.

Counties with Highest Potential Solar Development

Oregon County	Existing MWs	Projected MWs*	Existing MW Acreage as % EFU	Total MW Acreage as % EFU**
Morrow	50	2,500	0.03%	1.61%
Sherman	10	3,000	0.01%	3.58%
Wasco	211.7	703	0.17%	0.72%

**Approved, Under Review, and Proposed at EFSC*

***Total MW Acreage = Projected + Existing*

Solar’s footprint in Oregon

As of 2025, utility-scale solar projects made up

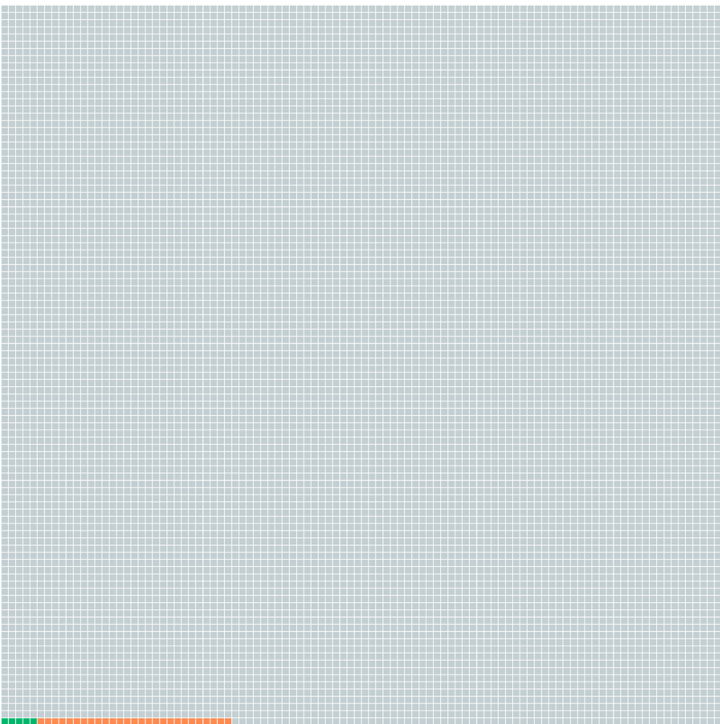
0.05% EFU lands,

comparable to a **grain of rice** on a dinner plate.

Combined, all operating projects and those in the EFSC Permitting Queue would occupy

0.32% EFU lands,

comparable to a **single blueberry** on a dinner plate.



■ Existing utility-scale projects ■ Rest of permitting queue
■ Remaining EFU Land



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Questions?
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