

What is biomass, what is a BDO Zone and why Lewis County?

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

What is biomass? The column at right by Economic Alliance Executive Todd Chaput details a \$400,000 grant awarded by TransAlta to develop biomass electrical generation in Lewis County and across the region assisted by a designation as a BDO Zone.

But just what is biomass electrical generation? And what is a BDO Zone? And why Lewis County?

The BDO (Bioeconomy Development Opportunity) Zone Initiative is an economic development platform that certifies regional readiness for bio-manufacturing across Canada and the United States. It de-risks project finance and helps rural and distressed communities attract multi-billion-dollar investments for new biofuel, sustainable aviation fuel, and bioproduct plants by providing rigorous risk assessments of local biomass supply chains.

In December of 2023 Lewis County was designated a BDO Zone for woody biomass with an AA rating, which denotes a high prospective viability of feedstock supply and Infrastructure and low expectations of default risk in the Zone. They indicate very strong ongoing capacity of the region to support new bio-based plant operations.

A webinar put on by Ecostrat Inc. in April of 2024 examined the potential for Lewis County. The one-hour event provided an in-depth exploration of biomass opportunities, highlighting prime locations in the U.S. for large-scale bioeconomy projects.

The webinar explored feedstock availability, infrastructure assets, and local incentives, positioning the Lewis County region as a prime destination for bio-based projects requiring a reliable supply of biomass feedstock.

The webinar was moderated by Jim Lane, editor of TheDigest, and featured Aryn Garswood, head of the BDO Zone Initiative, who introduced the key attributes of both BDO Zones and emphasized the significance of their ‘investment grade’ ratings. Chaput, the Initiative’s Program Manager at the Economic Alliance of Lewis County; and Robert Russell, retired paper mill engineer and community volunteer in Lewis County, provided comprehensive



Economic Alliance of Lewis County

Feedstock is available in Lewis County as a byproduct of the timber industry.



Darius Kinsey

Timber harvesting has a long history in Lewis County. Horses hauling a spruce log 30 feet in circumference after being cut down by loggers in 1905.

insights into their regions. They highlighted biomass resources, numerous project-ready sites, robust infrastructure, and enticing tax incentives. Their presentations illuminated why they actively pursued a BDO Zone designation and underscored why these locations are ideally suited for new bio-based project development, particularly those requiring a stable, long-term biomass supply.

Ecostrat Inc. is a North American industry leader specializing in biomass

supply chain management, feedstock sourcing and risk advisory services. Founded in 1997, the company helps bioenergy, biofuel, biochemical, and bioproduct developers source raw organic materials while mitigating supply chain risks. They serve as a vital link between capital markets and the bioeconomy by making large-scale biomass projects “bankable.”

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TransAlta keeps on underpinning the region’s economy

TODD CHAPUT

Executive Director

Economic Alliance of Lewis County

In 2010, TransAlta negotiated an agreement with then-Gov. Christine Gregoire and the state Department of Ecology to shut down its two coal-fired power plant boilers, the only such plants in Washington state.

TransAlta agreed to shut down one boiler by Dec. 31, 2020, and the second boiler by Dec. 31, 2025. TransAlta in exchange would be able to run the power plant until the closures, but also agreed to install new technology for \$200 million that would reduce mercury emissions by 50 percent and nitrogen oxide emissions by 20 percent.



As part of the deal Gov. Gregoire signed the TransAlta Energy Transition Bill which recognized the historic economic importance of TransAlta to Lewis County by contributing significant family-wage jobs and a lucrative tax base. The bill’s aim was to ease the hit of the loss of the plant to the community and also an agreement to assist TransAlta as it transitioned to a natural gas fired plant.

The Transaction Bill set up a \$55 million fund dedicated to our community to provide energy-efficient dollars for clean energy and worker retraining.

Specifically, TransAlta agreed to set up an account to pay \$833,333 annually to fund energy efficiency and weatherization projects to benefit Lewis County residents, employees, businesses, non-profit organizations and local governments within Lewis County and South Thurston County. Another \$1.7 million annually was set up to fund education, retraining, economic development, and community enhancement. Another account was set up for \$2.1 million annually to fund energy technologies to create environmental benefits to our area.

The company has been a great community partner over the years, funding all sorts of community-enhancing programs and contributing in a massive way to our economy.

We hope TransAlta will be able to move forward with the final closure and transition to cleaner-burning natural gas, which would then help ease any future blackouts should they occur.

Creation of the Regional Biomass Technology and Innovation Hub

In the meantime, I am proud to announce that the Economic Alliance of Lewis County applied and received a \$400,000 grant through the TransAlta transition community account to study the feasibility for the development of a Regional Biomass Technology and Innovation Hub that would create a 60-megawatt wood-to-electricity renewable energy facility in Lewis County.

The Alliance will now head up the feasibility study through June 2029. The Alliance will contribute \$100,000 to the study in staff time, resources and project space, for a total cost of \$500,000.

In 2023 the Alliance identified an opportunity to create a Bioeconomy Development Opportunity Zone. This merges the two historical strengths of Lewis County — energy and timber. This Zone would accelerate the development of biomass (leftover timber slash and agriculture byproducts) to carbon neutral energy plants.

The goal is to position the region — Lewis County and beyond, as a national leader in biomass innovation and rural clean-technology deployment.

The Alliance believes that the leadership this grant will pay for is crucial for such a project to occur — leadership in bringing partners together for this win-win project. Key is the grant will help pay for a Director of Regional Bioeconomy Development and Innovation as an overall coordinator, along with a program manager. The Hub will represent Lewis, Skamania, Cowlitz, Wahkiakum, Pacific, Mason, Jefferson, Clallam counties.

TransAlta has been such a welcome partner to Lewis County and the company continues to keep on giving to this community.

Members: We want to thank you with a barbecue

Come join us on Aug. 20 from 1 to 3 p.m. at the Economic Alliance of Lewis County for our Membership barbecue. This annual gathering is our opportunity to thank our valued members for their continued support and partnership. Enjoy great food, connect with fellow members, and celebrate the strength of our business community. We look forward to seeing you there.

Why electricity rates are rising in Washington, but not in Lewis County

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Electricity rates are rising rapidly in Washington state and there has been a significant amount of attention to the impact on residential customers, according to a report from the Washington Policy Center.

A proposal from Puget Sound Energy would increase electricity rates by 17% next year and by nearly 30% over the next three years. And while there has been a lot of focus on Puget Sound Energy, they aren’t the only ones increasing rates, according to a news release from the Center.

Seattle City Light increased rates 6% this year and they expect to increase rates by nearly 10% a year in both 2027 and 2028. In Spokane, Avista proposed increasing rates by about 14% next year and 25% by 2030.

The primary reasons relate to the state’s climate laws, the need to update utility lines to prevent wildfires and projected future demand.

Investor-owned utilities like Puget Sound Energy and Avista are regulated monopolies and their rates are set by the Washington State Utilities commissioners appointed by the governor.

When utilities need to increase rates, they submit cost information to the utilities commission and agency staff then go through the filings to verify the costs and see if the request is reasonable. The costs include maintaining the infrastructure like wires and other equipment, generating or purchasing electricity, as well as complying with regulations and safety including projects that reduce the risk of wildfire from transmission lines.

That doesn’t mean data centers won’t increase demand in the future. According to an analysis by utilities across the region, the Pacific NW must add 1,600 MW effective capacity per year for the next decade. That is like adding the equivalent of two Snake River dams a year for a decade. That increase isn’t due to data centers. It is the increase from projected population growth and electrification.

Utilities like Puget Sound Energy are upgrading their electrical systems to reduce the liability that would come



BPA

The Bonneville Dam in Eastern Washington.

with sparking wildfires. For example, PacifiCorp, which serves south-central Washington state, is currently litigating about \$1 billion in damages due to fires plaintiffs claim the utility caused in 2020. Washington state law also requires utilities to plan for wildfire risk.

The state’s law requiring utilities to meet wind and solar targets, known as the Clean Energy Transformation Act, or CETA, is playing a big role in driving cost increases. By 2030, the energy provided by utilities must be CO2 neutral and at least 80 percent of the generation must be from non-emitting sources of electricity, which includes hydro and nuclear.

Why not in Lewis County

After public rate hearings held in September 2024, the Lewis County PUD Board of Commissioners adopted rates for the 2025–2026 period of 1.25% across all rate classes.

This adjustment was driven by rising power and material costs and is essential to maintaining reliable service while managing these financial pressure, but still, quite reasonable compared to what is happening across the state.

According to the Lewis County PUD, about 90% of the electricity Lewis County PUD delivers to your home or business comes from the Bonneville Power Administration,

known as BPA. BPA is a federal agency that operates 31 hydroelectric dams on the Columbia and Snake River systems — including Bonneville, The Dalles, and John Day on the Columbia River, and Ice Harbor, Lower Monumental, Little Goose, and Lower Granite on the Snake River.

Together these dams generate more power than any other hydroelectric system in the Western United States. That power flows to Lewis County PUD, which then delivers it to your meter. Lewis County PUD purchases power from BPA under a long-term contract and distributes it across the county.

The Columbia River runs whether or not electricity is being generated, so once the dams are built, the marginal cost of producing each additional unit of power is very low compared to coal, natural gas, and most solar and wind installations. BPA passes those low costs on to public utilities like Lewis County PUD — and they pass them on to you.

That is the primary reason Lewis County electric rates are among the lowest in the nation. It is not an accident or a subsidy; it is the direct result of publicly owned infrastructure on a major river system, operated on a not-for-profit basis and sold at cost to community-owned utilities like ours.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Greenwater Servicing — ‘Every job, a trail of smiles’



Greenwater Servicing photos

Greenwater Servicing's James Henry works timber.

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

Greenwater Servicing based in Cinebar is your general contractor, offering property services, interior/exterior remodels, maintenance and repair — with the motto of “Every job, a trail of smiles.”

From the rafters to the roots — they handle it all. Whether you need tree work, a deck repaired, a bathroom remodeled, to rehab a fence, or a property refresh, they are a great choice, committed to what they do and client happiness is their top priority.

Greenwater Servicing is locally owned and operated by the husband and wife team of James and Sheri Henry. They offer fast response times, are fully equipped (including a Bobcat MT100, Kubota tractor and sawmill on site) and professional serving Cinebar and surrounding areas.

James, an ironworker for 18 years, works in steele as a specialty, and is truly a man of all trades, as well as an accomplished artist, including art with wood, metal and epoxy. Sheri is a painter using watercolors and acrylic. Often, they collaborate. Their most satisfying projects were restoring an airplane propeller that a rich client used as lawn art; another fulfilling artsy project was making chairs out of ski lift swings.

But those are side jobs.

“We created to fill a niche we saw that was needed,” Sheri said. “We love working with property managers and as owner reps. That variety of skills that James has fits well.”

They moved from Enumclaw a few years ago to consolidate their business (their shop space was separate and they lived in the city). They looked for a more expansive piece of property and found one in Cinebar.

“We fell in love with Lewis County and here we are,” Sheri said. “We needed more space for our dogs, gardening and in town just wasn’t working for us.” Their aim is to grow enough food to fill their needs, a type of homesteading.

“We try to be a one-call solution, we want to be the contractor that can do all you need,” Sheri said. “We’re relationship focused. We would rather grow with a client over time — build relationships and take care of all their needs.”

Customer Devin Grdinic said, “I’ve been working with James and his team for the past six years on multiple projects, and I couldn’t recommend them

more highly. They’ve handled everything from a major interior and exterior renovation of our cabin to rebuilding our deck, crawlspace cleanout, and tree maintenance work. What keeps me coming back is James’s excellent communication — he’s clear, responsive, and keeps you informed throughout the entire process. Every project has felt like a true partnership rather than just a contractor-client relationship. He listens to what you want, offers thoughtful input, and delivers quality work across the board.”

Greenwater Servicing offers:

Home Repair & Interior Maintenance

- General home repair
- Interior painting
- Bath & kitchen remodels
- Window maintenance & repairs
- Project planning & consulting

Exterior Cleaning & Maintenance

- Whole house exterior cleaning / house washing
- Pressure washing
- Pro-level window cleaning (inside & out)
- Roof cleaning, moss removal & treatment
- Gutter cleaning
- Gutter repair

Decks, Fences & Outdoor Structures

- Deck construction
- Pergola construction
- Deck repair
- Deck & fence staining / painting
- Fence installation (including arbors)
- Fence repair
- Shed construction
- Wood shed construction
- Chicken coop construction
- Garden structure construction
- Outbuilding repair (sheds, coops, garden structures)
- Pole barn construction
- Agricultural outbuildings

Site Work & Drainage

- Trenching services
- French drain installation
- Utility trenching
- Water line repair & replacement
- Retaining wall construction
- Culvert installation & repair
- Driveway repair & gravel driveway grading

Land Management & Site Cleanup

- Defensible space creation



Cabin renovation

- Wildfire fuel reduction
- Brush clearing
- Site cleanup
- Debris removal
- Junk removal
- Structure & outbuilding demolition
- Snow & storm cleanup

Property Management & Caretaking

- Ongoing property maintenance programs
- Caretaker services
- Absentee owner property checks
- Vacation home & cabin maintenance
- Log cabin refurbishment & restoration
- Log chinking
- Cabin renovation

Project Management & Owner’s Rep

- Project planning
- Construction project management
- Owner’s representative services

Tree Services

Have some hazardous trees on your property? Maybe you just need to clean up your tree line and let in some light? They can help with that.

Sawmill/Specialty Wood

From the Forest to Your Home

When James takes down a tree in Lewis County or along the Mt. Rainier corridor, the story doesn’t end there. Using their on-site sawmill in Cinebar, they mill salvaged logs into beautiful live edge slabs, custom lumber, and specialty wood pieces — giving new life to trees that might otherwise become firewood. Whether you’re looking for a one-of-a-kind tabletop, reclaimed shelving, or custom-cut lumber for your next project, what comes off our mill is as unique as the land it came from. Serving Cinebar, Morton, Packwood, Mossyrock, Randle, and surrounding Lewis County communities.

Their Frontier 24-inch sawmill is not a production sawmill, but produces quality boards up to 23-inch wide and up to 16-foot long.

They can fill small, custom dimensional lumber orders for your project



Big jobs and small jobs

from a variety of species. Live edge slabs available in their climate-controlled shop for purchase. They are kiln-dried on-site. Hobby wood available and they can fill custom orders. They design and make art pieces and furniture, including mantles with live edge wood.

Generac Generator Dealer/Installer

As an authorized Generac generator dealer and installer, they can help make sure you have power when you need it. A Generac home standby generator automatically restores power to your home during an outage, whether caused by storms, failed equipment, or an overworked power grid, so your life goes on uninterrupted.

- Automatic transfer switch activates in seconds
- Runs on natural gas or propane
- Professional installation with permit handling
- Free in-home consultations
- Financing options available

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Contact • 253-279-3847
www.greenwaterservicing.com

Discover Lewis County July Fourth events

BY THE ECONOMIC ALLIANCE OF LEWIS COUNTY

DiscoverLewisCounty.com

Discoverlewiscounty.com is supported by the Economic Alliance of Lewis County

America’s 250th Fourth of July Celebration in Chehalis

Celebrate the Fourth of July in Chehalis at America’s 250th Fourth of July Celebration at Stan Hedwall Park. This family-friendly event features a full day of live music, food vendors, local organizations, shopping, games, and activities for all ages. Families, friends, and visitors come together to enjoy an atmosphere filled with community pride, patriotism, and summertime fun. Throughout the day, guests can explore booths, enjoy entertainment, and connect with local businesses and nonprofits. The celebration concludes with a spectacular fireworks show lighting up the sky over Stan Hedwall Park.

Learn more at the City of Chehalis website.

Vader Fourth of July Festival and Fireworks

Join the community of Vader for a day filled with fun. Hell on Wheels Car Show, a beer garden, live music, vendors, food, and of course ending the night with a stellar firework show. This event is sponsored by Lewis County and the city of Vader. Car show entrants can sign up at <https://vadercarshow.com/>
Find more information at: www.vaderwa.org

Pe Ell Fourth of July Parade and Festivities

Celebrate Independence Day the Pe Ell way. Enjoy a full day of small-town fun with a morning car show, local vendors, great food from volunteer firefighters, and the beloved annual fireworks show lighting up the night sky. Bring your family, your lawn chairs, and your festive spirit for a memorable Fourth of July in charming Pe Ell.

Centralia’s Summerfest

Historic Downtown Centralia welcomes you to celebrate the Fourth of July. This annual event celebrates the vibrant spirit of summer in the community. This festival offers a wide array of activities, from games and family fun at Cen-



tralia College to picnicking at George Washington Park. Attendees line Historic Downtown in their red, white, and blue for the annual parade.

Free entrance day at Mount Rainier National Park • July 4

Fee-free days at national parks offer an incredible opportunity for nature enthusiasts and adventure seekers to explore the natural wonders of the United States without any admission fees. These designated days, established by the National Park Service, provide visitors with

free access to some of the most breathtaking landscapes and cultural treasures in the country. Whether you’re interested in hiking through majestic forests, marveling at towering mountains, or discovering historical landmarks, the fee-free days make it easier than ever to immerse yourself in the beauty and diversity of America’s national parks. Take advantage of these special days to visit Mount Rainier National Park, partially located in East Lewis County. This is just the opportunity to experience the natural splendor and rich history of Mount Rainier.

BIOMASS:

Continued From Page B1

Peter Wolf, project director for Ecostrat said, “This [Lewis County] is one of the leading regional forestry industries in North America in terms of value added production. In the entire BDO Zone you have 17 sawmills (2 million bone dry tonnes produced annually), but if you just focus on the four sawmills around Centralia you have about 300,000 bone dry tonnes available. There is a network of mobile and stationary chipping units in the area. The pulp and paper industry has been in decline, so a lot of these units are idling, a new project would be able to utilize these assets.”

The biomass project fits in directly with the aim of the Economic Alliance of Lewis County.

The Alliance’s goal is to contribute to the economic vitality of the community by increasing the number of jobs and improving the local quality of life. To accomplish the Alliance goals, we work to retain local businesses and aid them in expanding as well as recruit new businesses to the area.

“The BDO Zone initiative certifies regional readiness for bio-based manufacturing, creates global connection with project developers and ignites an influx of clean energy opportunities. This aligns with our core vision of economic viability and our abundant natural resources,” the Alliance stated.

Chaput weighed in during the webinar. “What makes us [Lewis County] uniquely qualified for investment is our proximity to transportation hubs, we have rail throughout our county and all our ports, including four deep water ports centered in Centralia (the Port of Tacoma at 54 miles away, the Port of Olympia at 20 miles away, the Port of Grays Harbor at 70 miles away and the Port of Longview at 50 miles away). We have a ready workforce that is skilled in the logging industry. Lewis county is the leading power generator in the state, we have inexpensive power through hydro and natural gas. There are a lot of advantages for developing in our region and the BDO Zone rating helps put a stamp on that.”

Russell agreed. “Woody biomass is here, 1.2 million green tons available year over year. Lewis County has been harvesting biomass for over 150 years,” Russell said. “Our forests are expertly managed, the citizens here believe in and want development in our area. Lewis County is business friendly, we have officials that believe in growth and want to grow the bioeconomy. We are excited to get deeper into our wood basket and work with companies that want to partner with us here in Lewis County.”

It helps that Lewis County leads all Western Washington counties with forest biomass and forest residue availability.

The Alliance hosted its third annual Woody Biomass Conference in November of 2025 at Centralia College.

The conference welcomed two new

companies that hope to lead the effort for biomass use and give the timber industry a boost — Ways2H and Regenerative Industrial.

Regenerative Industrial is already operating in Lewis County out of a plot of land in Onalaska neighboring the active Krume Lumber Mill. The company is using wood scraps from the mill to create three main products: high grade carbon, wood vinegar and wood tar. The three products have a range of industrial and agricultural uses.

Russell was one of the keynote speakers. According to Russell, there are 600,000 dry tonnes of residuals including tree tops, wood scrap and wood that would usually be sold to a pulp mill.

“So 120 chip trucks a day lays out in the woods or are not being sold to the sawmills,” Russell said. “Our people have verified it. We have a lot here, and that’s why these people are here talking to you today.”

In awarding the AA rating to Lewis County, Ecostrat Inc. backed up its designation.

“The Lewis County BDO Zone encompasses an 8,177-square-mile area in Western Washington state, defined by a 75-mile drive distance from Centralia. The regional wood products industry is one of the largest in the country, producing over 1 billion board feet/year (8 million tons/year) and providing direct employment to over 10,000 and indirect employment to over 20,000.

“The regional industry is supplied

primarily by privately owned timberlands, approximately 2 million acres of which are located within the BDO Zone. Forests are comprised mainly of Douglas fir. Stands of spruce and hemlock are present in the coastal area in the western portion of the BDO Zone. Douglas fir forests transition into mixed softwood forests further east towards the Cascade Range.

“The forests in the region are some of the most intensively managed in North America. As sawmills have become increasingly efficient (e.g., reductions in minimum acceptable log diameter) and tree planting has become more common, harvesting frequency has increased. ...

“Regulatory development is ongoing, providing a balance between ecological and economic objectives. We estimate that new projects seeking to utilize woody biomass for the production of energy, fuels, chemicals, or other bio-products would have access to 600,000 bdt/yr (1.2 million tons/yr) of wood fiber in the form of pulpwood, forest residue, and sawmill residuals.

“Pulpwood is currently underutilized in the region owing to the continued decline of the North American pulp and paper industry. ... A total of 200,000 bdt/yr is forecast to be available for new projects over the next 20-30 years at low risk. Slash that remains at roadside following product separation is also expected to be available to new projects with minimal additional investments in personnel and equipment.”

— *The Chronicle contributed to this report.*

PROPERTY SPOTLIGHT • 288 STURDEVANT ROAD - 9.68 ACRES • CHEHALIS



Utilities:
 Water: City of Chehalis
 Sewer: City of Chehalis
 Zoning: Industrial
 Electricity: Lewis County PUD

For information on this property and others available throughout Lewis County (or to list your industrial/commercial property for sale or lease), contact Economic Alliance of Lewis County External Relations Manager Eric Sonnenberg at 208.206.5407 or eric@lewiscountyalliance.org.



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