

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Work in progress: Audit description

Ensuring Climate-Resilient Infrastructure to Meet Washington's Growing Energy Needs

Earth's changing climate will eventually affect nearly every aspect of life in Washington, from the natural and built environment to the people who live and work here. Washington is leading the way in adapting its approach to energy, having already enacted several laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by replacing carbon-producing energy plants with renewable energy resources.

Already underway are projects to construct new renewable energy sources. They are designed to replace those that pollute while helping meet the growing electricity demands caused by a growing population and spiking temperatures. In planning new infrastructure, the state must consider how those new resources will fare throughout their working lifetime, given what scientists know about climate change. New energy projects should be sited and built with climate effects in mind. Extreme temperatures, for example, affect transmission efficiency, further stressing the grid when energy demand is especially high. In addition, more widespread, severe and frequent flooding and wildfires also pose added risks to energy infrastructure.

Many agencies and organizations play a critical role in Washington's ongoing conversion to entirely renewable energy resources. For example, the Department of Commerce recently completed a rulemaking to help guide local governments' climate change consideration in planning for growth. The Department of Ecology is currently updating the state's climate resilience strategy. Many more efforts are also in development.

Preliminary scope and objectives

This audit will look at how the state can ensure new energy infrastructure is sited and built considering the forecasted effects of climate change. The audit seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How can Washington ensure its new energy infrastructure will withstand forecasted climate change effects?
2. What information and practices can help the state site and build climate-resilient energy infrastructure?



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