BEFORE THE STATE OF WASHINGTON

ENERGY FACILITY SITE EVALUATION COUNCIL

In the Matter of Application No. 2009-01 WHISTLING Ridge Energy LLC WHISTLING RIDGE ENERGY PROJECT	OPENING ADJUDICATIVE BRIEF

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
TONY USIBELLI, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, ENERGY DIVISION

Introduction and Document Summary

The Washington State Department of Commerce (Commerce) continues to support construction of the Whistling Ridge Energy Project (WREP), subject always to completion of a quality EFSEC process. In this closing brief we simply highlight what we think are the most important points recommending the grant of a site certificate.

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Benefits of the WREP

The clearest statement of law about what the State's energy policy is, is the declaration made by the legislature in RCW 43.21F.010.

> The legislature finds and declares that it is the continuing purpose of state government, consistent with other essential considerations of state policy, to foster wise and efficient energy use and **to promote energy self-sufficiency through the use of indigenous and renewable energy sources**, consistent with the promotion of reliable energy sources, the general welfare, and the protection of environmental quality. [Emphasis added]

Other than the specific directions given to EFSEC in its own enabling statute (Chapter 80.50 RCW), there is probably no more succinct statement about the kind of energy facilities that the Council should hope to recommend - projects that use indigenous and renewable energy resources, that are reliable, in the public interest, and with limited environmental impacts. The WREP fits the bill.

The WREP will reap a free, indigenous resource, that is wind. Wind is a renewable resource, sown anew every day by the power of the sun.

The WREP will provide reliable power, not on an hourly basis, like hydropower, but on an annual basis, unlike hydropower.

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The WREP will help fulfill the public's mandate, passed as Initiative 937, and codified as Chapter 19.235 RCW, to require electric utilities representing 88 percent of the state's electricity load, to acquire significant percentages of renewable resources over time.

The WREP will be constructed on land that has been commercial timberland for over 100 years. While the final EIS remains, preliminary findings suggest minimal impacts to habitat and wildlife, that can be mitigated.

Electricity generation from wind produces no greenhouse gases, meaning that the WREP will help meet the State's obligations under RCW 70.235.020 to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The WREP will create relatively high income jobs, primarily during construction, but some permanently during operations, in Skamania County, where unemployment has grown to more than 12.9 percent according to the Skamania County Economic Development Council (Hovee, Ex. 41.02).

The WREP will provide tax income to the County, to benefit public institutions, such as schools, and public works, such as streets. And through the expenditures of the project for maintenance and supplies, and through the expenditures of its workers, the WREP

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will bring desperately needed income to businesses in the County. Due to the creation of the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area (SCA) and other federal programs, only seven percent of the County's land remains in private hands and is taxable. (Hovee, Ibid).

The construction of the WREP will include a new substation that will provide the only backup source of power for the County, according to the Skamania County P.U.D. , should the primary power source (Bonneville Dam) or connecting transmission fail. (Wittenberg, Ex. 43.00) Their existing back up source, Condit Dam, owned by Pacific Power, is scheduled for removal in 2011. (Ibid)

After a recent period during which we have seen the devastation wrought by oil drilling in the Gulf, bursting of a coal ash pond in Tennessee, and (so far) spewing of radioactivity from nuclear plants struck by earthquake and tsunami in Japan, it is a pleasure to support the WREP whose benefits are large and whose detriments minimal.

Respectfully Submitted,

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