

Bhavnani, Monica (CTED)

From: pat bales [REDACTED]@hotmail.com]
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2009 5:16 PM
To: CTED EFSEC
Subject: Whistling Ridge Energy Project
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Green

TO : Allen Fiksdal

From: Ken Bales-Glenwood ,Wa

I support the Whistling Ridge Energy Project. It will provide jobs for the local communities and produce clean energy for the future. We need to look for safe and clean energy resources for the future and this project will get us one step closer to that goal.

Thank You

Ken Bales

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Scoping Comment
#130

Bhavnani, Monica (CTED)

From: Don Morby [REDACTED]@hughes.net]
Sent: Thursday, May 07, 2009 9:34 PM
To: CTED EFSEC
Subject: whistling ridge wind project
Follow Up Flag: Follow up
Flag Status: Green

Thank you for coming to our area to listen. I must add to my comments at the meeting and that is I wanted to say that I hope you all listen with open heart and mind. All the high power lawyers that The special interest groups bring in are there for one reason and one reason only to make money for And from their clients the special interest groups. These groups are sharp but have no concern for The community they live in and are trying to run out any one who is not interested in wine or agri tour Business. They believe that these windmills will take away profit from their business of wine making And developing real estate. They are tearing out 100 year old orchards to make room for vineyards and Upwards of half million dollar homes. All this activity is within the Gorge Scenic area not outside of it. The county roads that these groups say are not consistent with usage were built with money from SDS and broughton and their timber industry in this area. SDS and Broughton have supported this Community in all endeavors from school scholarships to building a new fire hall. The vineyard people and Special interest groups have done nothing to bring any substantial income to this community. There has been large industry in this area since at least 1878 with Mill –A being the first large scale mill Operation. There has been several large scale mill operations since then but all had to close because Of the special interest groups using the spotted owl as a means to stop the mills. The special interest Groups were responsible through less than legitimate means at times for getting the National Scenic Area In place to begin with. They found legal loop holes that allowed Oregon’s Multnomah county and Washington Clark county that would allow that population to vote even tho 90 percent of the population did not live In the gorge. Of course all actual gorge residents combined were out numbered by 10 to 1. So please Allow the windmills to help us real gorge residents and don’t recommend any support to special interests.



**SKAMANIA COUNTY
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

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PAUL J. PEARCE
District 1

JIM RICHARDSON
District 2

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Scenic Area Discussion

We have heard and you will as well, that this application, if permitted, will be a blight on the Columbia Gorge Scenic area. Visible from a myriad of "Key Viewing Areas". What we believe is that Congress clearly understood what they were doing when they created the Scenic Area Act and drew a distinct border. In the Saving Clause of the Act they specifically said that there were to be no protective measures or buffer zones around the scenic area and went on to say;

*"The fact that activities or uses inconsistent with the management directives for the scenic area or special management areas can be seen or heard from these areas shall not, of itself, preclude such activities or uses up to the boundaries of the scenic area or special management areas."*¹

Interestingly we always seem to talk about the views in the Gorge as either north or south but never east or west. We mention this because at the west end of the scenic area fully in view from any number of key viewing areas sits the entire town of Washougal and the stacks of the Camas Paper mill. On the east end right on the boundary of the scenic area is the Maryhill Winery & Amphitheatre and in the distance a great many wind turbines.

What we have found is one of the new favorite tactics of opponents is to take any piece of a project, no matter how innocuous it may be, which lays within the scenic area and push for a full project review both inside and outside the area based on the innocuous section. At this very moment there is an attempt in Oregon to stop an industrial development in an urban area, where such developments are clearly permitted, because of an upgrade to a water line which happens to run through the scenic area to the industrial site.

¹Savings Provisions - Section 544(o) subsection (a)(10). The saving clause reads (in part)

"Nothing in sections 544 to 544p of this title shall -establish protective perimeters or buffer zones around the scenic area or each special management area. The fact that activities or uses inconsistent with the management directives for the scenic area or special management areas can be seen or heard from these areas shall not, of itself, preclude such activities or uses up to the boundaries of the scenic area or special management areas."

I wish to take a moment to speak about Scenic Area Permitting. I do so because for those who are not intimately involved in this activity it can be a little deceiving. Most people believe that the Gorge Commission manages permits in the scenic area. The fact is that permitting is done by five of the six counties respective planning departments. The permitting is based on adopted county ordinances and if a permit or decision is appealed, it is appealed to the county hearings officer. Only when an appeal is made of the hearing officers' decision does the Gorge Commission, sitting in an appellate role, hear the case. What is disturbing to most of us comes after the Gorge Commission issues a ruling. Due to the bi-state nature of the Gorge Commission, appellants are free to file their objections in the Court of either State. What this means practicably is that many of these have been filed in Oregon Courts no matter that they were Washington property decisions due to the Oregon Land Use model which is more restrictive toward private property rights.

The county supports this application and the EFSEC process and finds it appalling that at some point an Oregon Courts could be adjudicating any portion of the decision made in this process.

Economic Discussion

Skamania County is about a million acres in size. The National Forest covers 85% of that land mass. Additionally there are eighty thousand acres within the Scenic Area. There are sixty thousand acres of State Forest Trust land. All said the county has about 3% of its total land available for development of any kind from residential to industrial.

From 1970 through 1991 the National Forest produced on average 350 million board feet per year. This resulted in about 10 million dollars in revenue to the County and Schools in today's dollars. The State Forest Trust land produced an average of 2 million dollars for the county throughout the 80's and early 90's. Then the Spotted Owl was listed as an endangered species, and production shut down. During the 90's the Federal Government gave us Owl Guarantee money on the basis that once recovered the logging would continue. By 2000 it was obvious that the country was taking a different view of National Forest production and congress passed the Secure Rural Schools and Forest Counties Act, which paid us an amount equal to logging receipts through 2006. Again there was an assumption that logging receipts would increase. This did not occur and the act was reauthorized with a yearly declining payment until 2011. Without this money the county would have laid off half of our workforce and the schools would have lost

40% of their funding. On the state front our first quarter payment for State Timber Trust receipts for 2009 was one thousand dollars.

We spent a great deal of time working on the reauthorization effort of Secure Rural Schools legislation. I mention that because at the moment it is the life blood of our county. Less than 17% of our total budget comes from property tax. During the reauthorization fight we were told repeatedly by Senators, Congressman and the Administration that as rural timber dependant counties we need to transition our economies. This BOC has heard that loud and clear and is working hard to make the transition happen. We believe that Renewable Energy in all its many forms is an important part of that effort.

Finally I will simply say that there is a very vocal sector of Skamania Citizens that are against this project and moving our economy forward. I fully understand the "not in my backyard" mentality but in this day and age we as citizens cannot ask that the "other guy" bear the brunt of moving into the 21st century.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Lee". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "P" and "L".

Testimony of the Columbia Audubon Society before the Washington Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council regarding the Whistling Ridge Wind Energy Proposal
May 6, 2009

Good evening Mr./Ms. Chairman,

My name is Jill Barker. I live at [REDACTED] Mosier, Oregon. I thank you for this opportunity to make comments.

This evening, I'm providing comments for the Columbia Gorge Audubon Society regarding the environmental impact scoping for the Whistling Ridge wind energy facility proposal.

The Society is a Washington nonprofit with bi-state membership founded in 1988. Our mission statement is: The Columbia Gorge Audubon Society seeks to promote and enhance the enjoyment, understanding and protection of our natural world. Our interests are worldwide: our focus is the scenic beauty and ecological health of the Columbia River Gorge and its tributaries.

Our organization has long been involved in environmental issues in the Columbia Gorge region. The Society has challenged every windpower proposal that has threatened the scenic and ecological integrity of the Gorge, beginning with the Kenetech and CARES proposals in the east Gorge and most recently a proposal on Sevenmile Hill near The Dalles, where the developers eventually thought better of it and moved on. The Society coined the phrase "industrial windpower" in the early '90's that has become part of the popular vernacular describing modern industrial wind power facilities.

Founding members of the Society were centrally involved in the establishment of the Columbia River Gorge National Scenic Area and the White Salmon National Scenic River as federally protected landscapes. We believe both of these protected areas would fundamentally and irreparably be damaged by this proposed project.

Industrial windpower development is land-use intensive creating a large disproportion of land required compared to power produced. Wind power facilities become the dominate feature of affected landscapes and thus, have the potential for significant impacts to natural systems and human communities.

There's no regional or national coordinated planning; no regional or national siting standards even though windpower is the most heavily subsidized (with public funds) form of energy production. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service charged with protecting Threatened and Endangered species, migratory birds and eagles, etc. has yet to adopt permanent development guidelines. Often as not, local governments afflicted by cozy politics and an insatiable desire for a larger tax base make monumental decisions regarding placement and density of projects.

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We built dams on every suitable hydro head up the Columbia and Snake Rivers, and politicians and economic boosters rejoiced "it's renewable, it's green and it's good for business". We now know the rest of the story: the world's greatest anadromous fishery has been driven to near extinction and Celilo Falls, the great natural wonder and cultural epicenter of North America is no more! Are we making the same mistakes with wind energy?

With the advent of numerous projects in various geographic locations, important and useful data is now available as to their impacts on human health and the damage to property including valuations. Existing data strongly suggest that industrial windpower and human communities are incompatible. It is doubtful that industrial windpower will ever be erected in the Puget Sound area. We suspect that residents and their elected representatives there have a visceral feeling for this incompatibility. But as long as decision makers can foist this menace, as with toxic waste and garbage, on rural communities and Indian reservations, all is well for industrial windpower developers and speculators.

The tremendous industrial scale of modern windpower facilities can have profound effects on natural flora and fauna and their physical environment. This proposed project is the first industrial windpower project in the Western US proposed in primary forestland where the impact is known to be much more severe. The Nature Conservancy considers industrial windpower to be the greatest threat to biodiversity of the American Great Plains. Habitat fragmentation, habitat avoidance and bird/bat/blade interactions are well documented. Ridge top windpower facilities, such as Whistling Ridge, are tantamount to mountain top coal mining: ridge tops are leveled and permanently stripped of vegetation, sending sedimentation, lubricating fluids, tower cleaning fluids as well as herbicides and pesticides used to control competing vegetation and unwanted wildlife into down-slope water systems. These are very real and serious consequences of ridge top wind mining.

A surprising (to some) result of wind energy development is the increase in atmospheric CO₂ (implicated in global warming) generated from back-up fossil fuel-fired facility development required to off-set a destabilization of the energy grid caused by windpower's famous unreliability, inefficiency and generation intermittency.

Specifically: The Society requests the project EIS analyze potential impacts on the following:

1. Human health, both physically and psychologically, of reasonably affected parties;
2. Potential residential displacement;
3. Potential loss of county tax revenue from property devaluations;
4. The Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area;

5. The White Salmon National Scenic River;
6. Buck Creek, a municipal water source and recreation area;
7. The Little White Salmon River and its role in anadromous fish production;
8. Other socio-economic impacts;
9. Wildlife, including Threatened and Endangered species such as the Spotted Owl and migratory and resident birds and bats & their migration routes.
10. Cumulative impacts on physical, biological and social elements of the environment from all past, present and reasonably foreseeable wind energy facilities in the Northwest
11. Increased CO2 emissions from required back-up fossil fuel-fired facilities.

Thank you for your attention,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jill Barker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Conservation Chair

TESTIMONY OF JAMES M. HUTCHISON
TO THE WASHINGTON ENERGY SITING COUNCIL
REGARDING SDS WIND POWER APPLICATION

The SDS proposed wind turbine field you are now studying is unique in several respects: It would be the first such project located directly adjacent to the Columbia River Gorge Scenic Area and would introduce turbine towers visible from various locations within the Scenic Area. The Gorge Act, though it did not visualize tall towers that would impact views from the gorge, is very specific about aesthetics. Since the Act's implementation, even single nonconforming houses have generated extensive debate.

Impacts on timber production and wildlife are major concerns related to the proposal. SDS intends to reduce all vegetation to no more than 15 feet high within 150 feet of each turbine. Within the next 350 feet, vegetation would be kept less than 50 feet high. Nearly all timber harvest would thus be permanently eliminated for approximately 18 acres around each turbine. For a 100 turbine field, this would total 1,800 acres, or nearly 3 square miles, of lost timber production. Turbine access roads and appurtenant facilities would multiply this loss several fold.

Numerous wildlife species, not just those threatened or endangered, rely of forest habitats. Bird mortality from wind turbines is fairly well documented, but most such studies have focused on turbines located outside of forest areas. Other wildlife concerns are associated with the SDS proposal; these concerns include seasonal use patterns, travel corridors, habitat alteration or removal, soil loss and associated stream sedimentation, and area abandonment by wildlife due to turbine noise. Many animals, with hearing more acute than ours, can be detrimentally affected by noise. Considering these and related concerns, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife's recommendation for a comprehensive cumulative effects analysis should be required for this or any wind turbine application, especially when proposed in a forest setting.

Various kinds of EIS studies are typically prepared and funded by the projects' proponents. However, for this and other wind power projects in Washington, your agency, the Energy Siting Council, prepares the EIS. That approach appears a most questionable use of public funds for this highly contentious proposed gorge project which the Governor may well not approve in the long run.

A Skamania County representative will apparently join the Siting Council to consider the Whistling Ridge turbine proposal. That person should logically be as open-minded and nonbiased as possible. Yet, it should be stressed that Skamania County's Board of Commissioners is already on record as favoring this proposal, plus another controversial proposal by SDS for a large rural resort within the Gorge Scenic Area, plus a big tribe-sponsored gorge gambling casino at Cascade Locks. Perhaps a bit of bias involved there!

This wind power application involves several precedents: No large wind power installations are in or next to the Gorge Scenic Area, and none in the Pacific Northwest

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are located on forest lands. Impacts on wildlife and timber harvest in such locations are essentially little studied and unknown. Wind is a legitimate source of power production, but only if it does not conflict overly with other values. In this case, placing multiple wind turbines which would remove hundreds of acres of sustainable tree harvest on forest lands favored by many forms of wildlife immediately adjacent to the Gorge Scenic Area appears substantially unwise.

James M. Hutchison 5-6-09
Retired fish and wildlife biologist
[REDACTED], Washougal, WA 98671