

Appendix B

Agency Scoping Meeting Notes



ENERGY FACILITY SITE EVALUATION COUNCIL
Whistling Ridge Energy Project - Application No. 2009-01

EFSEC Agency Scoping Meeting
Whistling Ridge Energy Project, Application No. 2009-01
May 6, 2009, 3:00 p.m.
Rock Creek Center
Stevenson, WA 98648

Panel Members:

Allen Fiksdal - EFSEC
Jim LaSpina - EFSEC
Bruce Martin – Council for the Environment
Rick Yarde – Bonneville Power Administration
Andrew Montano – Bonneville Power Administration
Katey Chaney - URS
Diane Ross – U.S. Forest Service

Katey Chaney explained that she is a consultant at URS working for the applicant to prepare the Application for Site Certification (ASC) and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Whistling Ridge Wind Energy Project. Katey described the project location, proposed turbine locations and access roads. The current analysis is focusing on several corridors (i.e. turbine strings) located along ridgelines on the project site. Most of the needed access roads already exist. The proposed sites of the turbine strings have already been cleared of trees by commercial logging operations. Two BPA transmission lines and a Williams Northwest Pipeline natural gas pipeline cross the site. A cell tower and several rock quarries are also located near the site.

Components for the turbines and towers will be transported by barge from Longview, WA to Bingen, WA. From Bingen the components will be hauled by truck to the site.

The project site has been surveyed for plants and animals and cultural resources. Some minor road improvements will be required off site to accommodate transport project components. Access to the site will be via SR 14 and local roads.

The project will include 50 turbine towers with a total of 75 MW of generating capacity. Each tower will be 424 feet tall (measured to the top of the turbine blades).

Visual simulations from 20 viewpoints have been prepared and include views from both sides of the Columbia River.

For the EIS, the key viewpoints will be evaluated and more visual simulations will be prepared, if necessary.



ENERGY FACILITY SITE EVALUATION COUNCIL

Whistling Ridge Energy Project - Application No. 2009-01

Judy Wilson (Skamania Co. Commissioner) was recently appointed as a voting member of the EFSEC Council.

Allen Fiksdal explained the role and responsibilities of EFSEC during the application process. He reviewed a “process” display board that showed the three stage process that EFSEC follows. The role of the Council is to review all application materials and make a recommendation to the Governor.

EFSEC also conducts an “adjudicative proceeding” process that allows project proponents and opponents to present facts and legal positions to the EFSEC board. This process will begin later in 2009.

The application for Whistling Ridge was submitted in March 2009.

Scoping meetings are being held today and tomorrow in Stevenson and Underwood, WA.

A required “Land Use Consistency Hearing” will be held tomorrow evening in Underwood.

EFSEC is required to make a recommendation to the Governor within 12 months of the application submittal date.

The applicant is conducting additional field studies during the spring and fall of 2009. Work on the draft EIS will begin later this year.

BPA is involved in the EIS because the project will connect to a BPA transmission line. Approval of the connection is a federal action subject to National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review.

BPA is the federal lead agency responsible for NEPA compliance. EFSEC is the lead agency for State Environmental Policy Act (SEPS) compliance.

The EIS will be prepared as a joint NEPA/SEPA EIS. The EIS and the scoping meetings will meet the needs of both EFSEC and BPA.

Bruce Martin is the Council for the Environment. He works for the State Attorney General. His job is to represent the interests of the environment.

The meeting was opened to questions from agency representatives.



ENERGY FACILITY SITE EVALUATION COUNCIL Whistling Ridge Energy Project - Application No. 2009-01

Diane Ross spoke on behalf of the U.S. Forest Service. She pointed out that the Columbia River Gorge area has been designated as a National Scenic Area by the U.S. Congress. The U.S. Forest Service is very concerned about the visual effect of the project on the National Scenic Area. She believes that the project will have a major affect on the protected natural, scenic, recreational, and cultural resources of the National Scenic Area. Diane reviewed the contents of a comment letter prepared by the Forest Service and she submitted the letter as part of the formal record.

Diane said the Service is concerned with the method used by the applicant to portray the visual impacts of the project in the EFSEC application. It is the Forest Service's opinion that the visual analysis does not focus on high value resources. Diane suggested using photos of wind turbine towers already in existence in the area (i.e. Miller's Island and the area above the Mary Hill Museum). She suggested EFSEC members go view these areas to get a better idea of the potential visual impacts. She stated that the visual simulations for the EIS need both day and night depictions. She believes the visual impacts of the project on the National Scenic Area will be significant.

The Forest Service is very supportive of wind energy projects in general, but in this case they have major concerns about how to solve tension between project impacts and benefits. The Service recommends that EFSEC determine which towers will be most visible from the National Scenic Area and move them or eliminate them to avoid visual impacts.

Diane believes the applicant needs to go into that level of detail. The analysis is wanting in this regard. She also felt the methodology of describing visual impacts did not track with what was presented in the application. The application needs a better explanation of how the computer images were developed. Were the images accurately represented or were they created using photo-shop software? Were the heights of the towers actually measured or just estimated? The final product of the analysis needs to present a solution or mitigation for the visual impacts.

Allen explained that a public scoping meeting would be held in this same room at 6:30 p.m. this evening. He also explained that a site visit would be conducted Thursday morning followed by a second scoping meeting to be held in Underwood, WA at 2:30 p.m. A Land Use Consistency Hearing would also be held in Underwood on Thursday evening at 6:30 p.m. Agency scoping comments are due by 5:00 p.m. on May 18, 2009.

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m.