

3.6 LAND USE AND RECREATION

This section describes existing land use and parks and recreation resources in the KVVWPP area. It also evaluates potential impacts on land use and recreation that would occur with proposed development, and identifies mitigation measures designed to limit or reduce those impacts. Consistency with relevant land use plans and policies is also assessed.

The analysis in this section is primarily based on information provided by the Applicant in the ASC (Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003a, Section 5.1). Where additional information has been used to evaluate the potential impacts associated with the proposal, such as the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, that information has been referenced. Existing land use information was confirmed in the field during site visits (March 2003). Land use plans and policies addressed for project consistency include relevant adopted state, county, and local plans and policies.

3.6.1 Affected Environment

The following discussion provides an overview of existing land use in the project vicinity. The study area for the land use analysis is within 1 mile on either side of the wind turbine strings. The project would be located entirely within unincorporated Kittitas County.

Existing Land Use

The KVVWPP site is located in central Kittitas County, approximately 10 miles northwest of the City of Ellensburg. The project area is characterized by a rural landscape of rolling hills and rangeland with scattered residences. The size of the project area is roughly 7,000 acres. Approximately 5,000 acres of the project area is in private ownership, with the remaining 2,000 acres owned by the state of Washington and managed by the Washington DNR (2003). The overall population density in the project area is low. There are approximately 60 dwellings within 1 mile of the proposed project. The closest residence, located in the northeast portion of the project area (Township 19 North, Range 17 East, Section 1), is approximately 790 feet from the nearest proposed wind turbine (H23) (see Table 3.12-5 in Section 3.12, Noise).

Land use in the project area consists of cattle grazing interspersed with some rural residential development. None of the land in the project area is irrigated and no crops are grown. Most grazing use is seasonal in nature (primarily in the spring). About half of the private property owners within the project area currently use their land for grazing; those owners primarily raise cattle, but one owner raises bison and horses. About half of the Washington DNR parcels within the project area are currently used for grazing.

Forested lands are north and east of the project site. The Wenatchee National Forest, which encompasses 2.2 million acres along a 135-mile segment of the eastern front of the Cascade Mountains, includes lands on the slopes of Table Mountain to the north and east of the project site. No commercial forestry operations are in the project vicinity.

Existing land use within 1 mile of the proposed turbine strings is shown in Figure 3.6-1. In addition to grazing, other uses in the project area include:

- A commercial gravel quarry on US 97 just south of the northern junction with Bettas Road operated by Ellensburg Cement Products;
- An inactive gravel quarry on Bettas Road north of the junction with Hayward Road owned by the Washington State Department of Transportation;
- Five Bonneville electric transmission lines traversing east to west across the project area, divided into one group of four near the middle of the project and one to the north;
- One PSE electric transmission line traversing east to west across the project area just north of the southern set of Bonneville lines;
- Three communication towers;
- Two state highways: US 97, running through the middle of the project area, and SR 10 south of the project area;
- Two county roads: Bettas Road, a paved, two-lane road near the western edge of the project area, and Hayward Road, an unpaved road in the southern portion of the project area;
- Five parcels of land totaling approximately 2,075 acres owned by DNR, located in Township 19 North, Range 17 East, Sections 2, 10, 16 and 22, which are currently leased for grazing;
- An approximate 550-acre parcel of private land in the Swauk Creek drainage currently under a conservation easement with the Nature Conservancy of Washington; and
- Agricultural lands south of SR 10 along the Yakima River.

Existing Zoning

The project area contains two Kittitas County zoning designations—Agriculture-20 and Forest and Range. The areas east of US 97 are zoned Forest and Range while those west of US 97 are zoned Agriculture-20. Figure 3.6-2 shows the location of county zoning designations within the project area.

According to the County's zoning code, the Agriculture-20 zone is dominated by farming, ranching, and rural lifestyles. The purpose of the zoning classification is to preserve fertile farmland from encroachment by nonagricultural land uses and to protect the rights and traditions of those engaged in agriculture. Permitted uses include residential, agriculture, and forestry practices. The minimum lot size is 20 acres (Kittitas County Code [KCC] 17.29.020).

The Forest and Range zone is intended to provide areas where natural resource management is the highest priority and where the subdivision and development of lands for uses and activities incompatible with resource management are discouraged. Permitted resource management uses include logging, mining, quarrying, and agricultural practices. Several residential uses are also allowed in the Forest and Range zone including single-family residences, duplexes, and cluster subdivisions. The minimum lot size is 20 acres (KCC 17.56.020).

Parks and Recreation

The Kittitas Valley area offers opportunities for a variety of recreational activities. Table 3.6-1 lists recreational facilities and activities available within a 25-mile radius of the project site (see

Figure 3.6-1:

Figure 3.6-2:

Figure 3.6-3). This area includes forests and wilderness areas, wildlife areas and refuges, boat launches, beaches and other water use sites, state parks, town parks, campsites, and museums. Ski areas beyond the 25-mile radius are located at Snoqualmie Pass and Mission Ridge.

Table 3.6-1: Parks, Recreational Facilities, and Activities within 25 Miles of the Project

Distance (Miles)	Facility
Ellensburg	
6	Thorp Mill (located in Thorp)
12	KOA Campground (private campground)
13	Kittitas County Museum
13	Burlington Northern Square
13	Kiwanis Park
13	McElroy Park
13	Memorial Park
13	Reed Park
13	Rotary Pavilion
13	South Main Entry Park
13	West Ellensburg Park
13	Skate Park
13	Children's Activity Museum
13	Clymer Museum and Gallery
14	Lions/Mountain View Park
14	Catherine Park
14	Irene Rinehart Riverfront Park
14	Whitney Park
14	Wippel Park
15	Paul Rogers Wildlife Habitat Park
15	Sagebrush Trail
16	Olmstead Place State Park and Heritage Center
Cle Elum/Roslyn	
5	Trailer Corral (private campground)
15	Cle Elum City Park
15	South Cle Elum City Park
15	Carpenter Museum
15	Cle Elum Historical Telephone Museum
15	South Cle Elum Depot Restoration
15	Whispering Pines (private campground)
20	Roslyn City Park
20	Roslyn Museum
25	Salmon La Sac Guard Station Restoration
Washington State	
1	Iron Horse State Park (no camping)
10	LT Murray Wildlife Area
15	Squilchuck State Park
16	Olmstead Place State Park
32	Lake Easton State Park
40	Ginkgo State Park (no camping)
40	Wanapum State Park

Table 3.6-1: Continued

Distance (Miles)	Facility
U.S. Forest Service (Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests)	
8	Red Top
8	Mineral Springs
8	Lion Rock
8	Taneum
12	Ken Wilcox at Haney Meadows
12	Icewater
12	Tamarack Spring
15	Swauk
15	Taneum Junction
17	Beverly
17	Manastash
20	Riders Camp
20	Wish Poosh
20	De Roux
21	Quartz Mountain
25	Salmon La Sac
25	Red Mountain
25	Cle Elum River
28	Kachess
30	Owhi
30	Cayuse
30	Crystal Springs
40	Fish Lake
40	South Fork Meadow

Source: Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003a.

The Wenatchee National Forest is a major recreational destination in central Kittitas County. The National Forest encompasses 2.2 million acres extending from Lake Chelan on the north to Rimrock Lake on the south. In the project area, the National Forest encompasses the lands on the slopes of Table Mountain to the north and east of the project site (see Figure 3.6-3). Although Table Mountain has relatively few developed recreational facilities, it is a popular destination for valley residents for winter sports, hiking, camping, picnicking, and other recreational activities. The best known feature on Table Mountain is Lion Rock, approximately 5.25 miles north of the National Forest boundary and 6.75 miles northeast of the project site. Lion Rock's attraction is the panoramic view it offers of the central Cascade Mountains to the north (Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003d).

The primary access from the Kittitas Valley into the National Forest is via Reecer Creek Road, which becomes National Forest Primary Route 35 at the forest boundary. From the National Forest boundary, Route 35 switches back numerous times up the slopes of Table Mountain. On these switchbacks, the landscape is generally open, and the project site is often visible approximately 3.25 miles to the southwest.

Another important recreation resource in the project vicinity is the John Wayne Trail, a hiking, biking, and equestrian trail developed in the Iron Horse State Park. This park was created on the former right-of-way of the Milwaukee Road railroad, which was acquired by Washington State

Parks in the 1980s. The John Wayne Trail extends 109 miles from a trailhead near North Bend on the west to the Columbia River on the east. In the project area, the trail extends along the south side of the Yakima River. The only formal entrance to the trail in this area is on Thorp Depot Road south of the community of Thorp. The ridges proposed for turbine development are approximately 1 to 5 miles from the trail. At its closest point, the project (turbine string B) is approximately 4,500 feet northeast of the trail.

Washington State campgrounds are operated on a first-come, first-served basis, and state regulations limit overnight stays to 10 days. The National Forest campgrounds exceed their capacity almost every weekend during the summer and often turn people away (Schmidt, pers. comm., 2002).

Summer recreational activities available near the project area include water sports such as fly fishing, swimming, boating, river rafting, gold panning, and water skiing, as well as camping, mountain biking, hay rides, hiking, horseback riding, hunting, cycling, picnicking, bird watching, rock hounding, berry and mushroom picking, softball, and other team sports. During the fall and winter, recreational activities include hunting, cross-country skiing, horse-drawn sleigh rides, inner-tubing, snowshoeing, downhill skiing, sledding, snowboarding, and snowmobiling. No fishing sites are within the project boundaries.

Some hunting occurs in the project area on both private and public lands. Hunting on private lands occurs at the discretion of the individual landowners. Two of the DNR sections within the project area (Sections 2 and 22) do not currently allow public access. The other two sections (Section 16 and Section 10) allow public access (Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003c).

3.6.2 Impacts of Proposed Action

Potential direct impacts of the proposed KVVPP would include conversion of rural lands to utility-related uses, potential conflicts between the project and onsite and offsite recreation activities, and increased demand for park and recreational resources. These types of direct impacts could be associated with construction, operations, and decommissioning of any of the proposed project elements, including wind turbines and meteorological towers, existing and new gravel access roads, additional power lines, and the proposed O&M facility and substations. Impacts associated with or attributable to specific project elements are discussed where applicable. Indirect land use and recreation impacts are not anticipated because the project is not expected to substantially induce regional growth to the extent that it would change offsite land uses or use of offsite resource-based recreation areas. Table 3.6-2 summarizes potential impacts on land use and recreation under the three project scenarios. Potential impacts on adjacent land uses from construction-related noise and dust are discussed in Section 3.12, Noise, and Section 3.11, Air Quality.

Figure 3.6-3:

Table 3.6-2: Summary of Potential Land Use and Recreation Impacts

	82 Turbines/2.5 MW (Lower End Scenario)	121 Turbines/1.5 MW (Middle Scenario)	150 Turbines/1.3 MW (Upper End Scenario)
Construction Impacts			
Temporary conversion of existing land uses at construction sites	231 acres of disturbance	311 acres of disturbance	371 acres of disturbance
Conflicts between onsite and offsite recreation and construction activities	231 acres of disturbance; <31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur	311 acres of disturbance; 31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur	371 acres of disturbance; >31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur
Increased demand for recreational resources by construction employees	Same as middle scenario	160 employees during peak construction month.	Same as middle scenario
Operations and Maintenance Impacts			
Permanent conversion of existing land uses	118 acres of disturbance	93 acres of disturbance	95 acres of disturbance
Conflicts between onsite and offsite recreation and operations	118 acres of disturbance; <31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur	93 acres of disturbance; 31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur	95 acres of disturbance; >31 turbines on DNR property where hunting may occur
Increased demand for recreational resources by O&M employees	Same as middle scenario	6-7 new permanent employees in project area	9-10 new permanent employees in project area
Decommissioning Impacts			
Temporary land disturbance	Similar to those described for construction; no permanent land use impacts	Similar to those described for construction; no permanent land use impacts	Similar to those described for construction; no permanent land use impacts
Conflicts between recreation and decommissioning activities	Similar to those described for construction	Similar to those described for construction	Similar to those described for construction

Source: Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003f.

Construction Impacts

Temporary Land Use Conversion

During project construction, from 231 acres to 371 acres of land would be altered. Construction activities would temporarily interfere with existing rangeland uses. Temporary land use disturbance would result from construction of turbines, roads, substations, meteorological towers, overhead poles, and the O&M facility. The estimated amount of temporary land disturbance would be the same under the three project scenarios for all project facilities with the exception of turbine laydown areas and roadways (see Chapter 2, Table 2-2).

Direct construction impacts are anticipated to be moderate but temporary, lasting approximately one year under the three project scenarios. However, conflicts between proposed construction activities and existing grazing operations are anticipated, and cattle or other livestock would need to be removed from areas where blasting or heavy equipment operations are taking place.

Construction impacts would be greatest under the upper end scenario because it would involve the largest amount of land use disturbance.

Parks and Recreation Resources

Project construction activities would be intermittent and temporary (extending over portions of one recreation season). Construction would not likely have significant adverse effects on existing recreation resources or their users in the project area. Temporary impacts on private landowner-approved activities such as hunting or rock hounding could occur during project construction.

Potential conflicts between recreation users on DNR property and wind turbine construction activities could impair the use and enjoyment of recreational activities such as hunting and hiking in the project area. Approximately 31 turbines and two permanent meteorological towers would be constructed on DNR property under the middle scenario. Because more turbines would be constructed under the upper end scenario, it would have the greatest potential impacts.

Project construction would not have significant adverse direct effects on offsite recreation resources or their users in the nearby Wenatchee National Forest. Recreation opportunities in the National Forest are more than 3 miles from the project site, and access to the National Forest does not extend through the project site. Although the John Wayne Trail is located as close as 1 mile from the closest turbine under the upper end scenario, construction-related disturbance would be temporary and is not anticipated to have a significant adverse effect on the experience of park visitors.

Some parks and campsites may experience increased use by temporary (transient) workers who seek temporary accommodations during project construction. Transient workers could displace recreational users. However, recreational demands are typically higher on weekends, while workers would be more likely to use the facilities on weekdays.

There are approximately 1,150 hotel and motel rooms, recreational vehicle park spaces, and campground sites available in Kittitas County. During the peak summer season, approximately 240 rooms or sites are vacant at any one time, compared to 760 rooms during the off-peak months. In addition, many of the construction workers would not require overnight lodging if they come from the local area or commute from the Yakima metropolitan area (within a 1-hour drive). There would be an adequate supply of recreational lodgings to accommodate the temporary increased demand for facilities by the project's transient workforce, and no significant impact on parks and recreation use would occur in the project area.

Operations and Maintenance Impacts

Permanent Land Use Conversion

Proposed project facilities would result in the permanent conversion of 93 to 118 acres of land from cattle grazing/rangeland to energy production. (The term permanent, in the context of land use impacts, means for the life of the project or for at least 20 years.) The estimated amount of

permanent land disturbance would be the same under the three scenarios for all project facilities except turbine sites and roadways (see Chapter 2, Table 2-1).

The acreage converted for the project would no longer be available for rangeland use, including approximately 46 to 59 acres used for grazing (Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003c). This potential impact would be greatest under the lower end scenario, which would have the greatest amount of permanent land use conversion.

Permanently converted acreage would represent a small portion of the 7,000 acres of rangeland within the project area and the 445,000 acres of pasture or unimproved grazing land in Kittitas County (Kittitas County 2002a). In this context, loss of grazing land on the project site would not likely adversely affect the productivity of cattle grazing operations. According to the Applicant, wind turbine operations are highly compatible with grazing activities, and cattle, sheep, and other domestic animals routinely graze underneath operating wind turbines (Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003a, Section 5.1.7). However, the permanent conversion of rangeland uses to wind energy production would result in an unavoidable impact.

Parks and Recreation Resources

Impacts on private landowner-approved recreation activities such as hunting or rock hounding could occur during project operation. However, these impacts are expected to be minimal. Hunting on private lands leased for the wind project would continue to be at the discretion of the individual landowners. Public access to private property would continue to be restricted under future lease agreements between the Applicant and those property owners.

The presence of wind turbines on publicly accessible DNR property could impair the use and enjoyment of recreational activities in the project area. As described above, 31 turbines and two meteorological towers would operate on DNR property under the middle scenario. However, this potential impact would be greatest under the upper end scenario, which would have the largest number of turbines. Because of liability and safety concerns, it is anticipated that recreational activities would be either not allowed or restricted on DNR lands leased for wind energy use (see Section 3.6.5, Mitigation Measures).

Operating wind turbines would be visible from the southern portion of the Wenatchee National Forest and from the John Wayne Trail (see Section 3.9, Visual Resources, for a detailed discussion of the anticipated aesthetic effect of the project). Based on distances to the project site and the assessment of visual sensitivity from these recreational viewpoints, it is unlikely that views of the new wind turbines would have significant adverse impacts on recreational users in the project vicinity.

The operating workforce for the project would range from 6 under the lower end and middle scenarios to 10 staff under the upper end scenario. Because of the small size of the operating work force, no significant increase in the demand for recreational services and opportunities would occur in the project area.

Decommissioning Impacts

If the KVVPP facility were decommissioned, temporary land disturbance of the type and magnitude described for project construction would be anticipated. Temporarily disturbed lands would be restored to their original condition through grading and planting. Upon decommissioning, land use impacts from facility operations would be largely reversible. Once facilities were removed, acreage taken out of open space and rangeland use could be returned to these prior uses. An exception might be some of the access roads, which local landowners may decide to continue to use and maintain. No permanent land use impacts would result from decommissioning.

Limited impacts on recreational activities on the site could occur during project decommissioning activities. However, once the site is reclaimed to pre-project conditions, recreational use in the affected area could resume.

3.6.3 Impacts of No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the project would not be constructed and existing land and recreation uses in the project area would continue without the influence of the proposed project. The specific type, nature, and extent of future development at the project site are unknown, and would depend primarily on county growth trends. The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code would govern development at the project site. As described under Affected Environment, permitted land uses in the project area include ranching, resource management uses such as agricultural practices, and residential. Existing informal uses of the land for hunting and rock hounding would likely continue. However, this does not preclude other development allowed under permitted uses in the project area.

Under the No Action alternative, the region's power needs could be addressed through development of a gas-fired combustion turbine. Such a combustion turbine facility would likely be developed on land zoned for industrial development of a similar type and nature. A combustion turbine facility generating 60 aMW of power would require approximately 14 acres for the plant site (Bonneville and U.S. Department of Energy 1993). To operate, gas-fired turbines may also require on-shore gas extraction and transportation of the gas to the power plant (via pipeline). Although the specific acreage requirement for these facilities as part of the No Action Alternative is unknown, they could result in potential land use impacts. The specific type, nature, and extent of land use impacts under the No Action Alternative would depend on the location of the combustion turbine plant and its associated facilities.

3.6.4 Consistency with Plans and Policies

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the consistency of the KVVPP with adopted land use plans, policies, and regulations. Applicable elements of each plan, policy, or regulation are summarized and followed by an analysis of project consistency.

State of Washington

Growth Management Act

The Growth Management Act (GMA) contains a comprehensive framework for managing growth and coordinating land use planning and infrastructure. Urban and rapidly growing local government jurisdictions are subject to GMA. Kittitas County opted into the GMA voluntarily on December 27, 1990 (Kittitas County 2002a). Some of the relevant goals of the GMA are to: (1) encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner, (2) reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development, (3) encourage economic development that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, (4) maintain and enhance natural resource-based economies, and (5) support the economic development of public facilities and services necessary to support development (RCW 36.70A.020).

Consistency Discussion

The Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code are the primary mechanisms for implementing the requirements of the GMA. To the extent that the proposed project is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code, it is also inconsistent with the GMA.

The proposed project is currently inconsistent with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan. The Applicant submitted a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Kittitas County in June 2003 that would change the land use designation in the project area from Rural to Wind Farm Resource overlay district. County approval of this land use designation change would make the project consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan.

Neither of the current Agricultural-20 or Forest and Range zones in the project area allow for wind power projects either as a permitted or conditional use. For the project to be considered consistent with the current County Zoning Code, KCC 17.61A.040(B) requires a site-specific rezone of the zoning map to Wind Farm Resource overlay zone (Kittitas County 2002b). The Applicant submitted a rezone application in June 2003 to Kittitas County that would reclassify the project area (roughly 7,000 acres) from the existing Agriculture-20 and Forest and Range zones to Wind Farm Resource overlay zone. County approval of this rezone application would make the project consistent with the Zoning Code. Additional discussion of project consistency with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code is presented below.

Shoreline Management Act

The Shoreline Management Act regulates development within 200 feet of the ordinary high water mark of marine shorelines, streams with a mean annual flow in excess of 20 cfs, and lakes of 20 acres or more in size (as well as to the edge of wetlands associated with these water features). Ecology (Chapter 173-22 WAC) regulates shorelines of the state through local agencies. Each county or city in the state, including Kittitas County, has developed a Shoreline

Master Program (SMP) (Kittitas County 1975) specifying restrictions that may apply to a given water body and outlining steps necessary to obtain approval for alteration or development.

Consistency Discussion

In the project area, two water bodies are under the jurisdiction of the SMP: Swauk Creek and the Yakima River. The project site is outside the designated shoreline of both water bodies. Therefore, the project is not subject to compliance with the Shoreline Management Act or Kittitas County SMP.

Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council

The siting of large thermal energy facilities is regulated by EFSEC under Chapter 80.50 RCW (Energy Facilities—Site Locations) and Title 463 WAC. Applicants for 100% renewable energy resource projects may choose to receive certification from EFSEC, as is the case for this project. An applicant requesting certification from EFSEC is required to submit detailed information on the proposed project and impacts the project may have on the natural and built environments. The applicant is also required to describe the means to be used to minimize or mitigate possible adverse impacts on the physical or human environment (WAC 463-42-085). Further, the applicant is required to set forth insurance, bonding, or other arrangements proposed to mitigate damage or loss to the environment (WAC 463-42-075).

WAC 463-28 requires EFSEC to determine whether the proposed project is consistent and in compliance with local land use plans or zoning ordinances. Should EFSEC find that land use is not consistent, WAC 463-28 provides procedures for EFSEC to follow to determine whether to recommend that the state preempt local land use plans or zoning ordinances for a site or portions of a site for an energy facility. An applicant is required to make every effort, including changes to the project design, to comply with all local land use plans, zoning ordinances, and shoreline management plans in effect at the date of the application filing. An applicant who is unable to resolve the issue of noncompliance related to consistency with land use and zoning regulations may file a written request for state preemption of those regulations (WAC 463-28-020). Should preemption be requested, and should EFSEC approve the request and recommend to the governor that the state preempt local land use plans and ordinances, EFSEC must include conditions that give due consideration to state or local governmental or community interests affected by the construction and operation of the facility, as well as to the purposes of laws or ordinances, or rules or regulations superseded (WAC 463-28-070).

Consistency Discussion

EFSEC's certification of the proposed project is subject to a finding of land use consistency with Kittitas County land use plans and zoning ordinances, or to a preemption process. At the land use hearing on May 1, 2003, EFSEC determined that the project is not consistent with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan or Kittitas County Zoning Code, and that the Applicant is responsible for requesting the necessary change to, or permission under, the land use plans and all reasonable efforts to resolve the noncompliance. The Applicant has submitted applications to

the County for a Comprehensive Plan amendment and rezone of the project area in order to bring the project proposal into compliance with local land use plans and zoning ordinances.

Kittitas County

Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan

Consistent with the GMA, Kittitas County’s Comprehensive Plan contains goals and policies for growth and development in the county. It includes elements for land use, housing, transportation, capital facilities, utilities, and rural lands.

Land use designations establish the general location and types of permitted uses. The project area is designated in the Comprehensive Plan as Rural. Generally, this designation includes a diverse range of land uses and housing densities that are compatible with rural character. The most common uses in this land use designation are agriculture and logging.

The plan’s goals, policies, and objectives for land uses on rural lands are "established in an attempt to prevent sprawl, direct growth toward the urban Growth Areas and Nodes, provide for a variety of densities and uses, respect private property rights, provide for residences, recreation, and economic development opportunities, support farming, forestry and mining activities, show concern for shorelines, critical areas, habitat, scenic areas, and open space while keeping with good governance and the wishes of the people of Kittitas County, and to comply with the GMA and other planning mandates" (Kittitas County 2002a).

Consistency Discussion

The proposed project is inconsistent with the Kittitas County Comprehensive Plan. In June 2003, the Applicant submitted a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Kittitas County that would change the land use designation at the project area from Rural to Wind Farm Resource overlay district. County approval of this land use designation change would make the project consistent with the County’s Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan was reviewed to assess the project’s consistency with County policies. Each Goal, Policy, and Objective (GPO) listed below was determined to be potentially relevant to the proposed project. The text of each policy is followed by an analysis of the project’s consistency.

Chapter 2: Resource Lands—Commercial Agriculture Land Use

- “GPO 2.114B. Economically productive farming should be promoted and protected. Commercial agricultural lands includes those lands that have the high probability of an adequate and dependable water supply, are economically productive, and meet the definition of ‘Prime Farmland’ as defined under 7 CFR Chapter VI Part 657.5....”

The proposed project is not located on or immediately adjacent to land designated for commercial agriculture land use in the County Comprehensive Plan. The project would be

developed on non-irrigated land, about half of which is used for cattle grazing. This land does not satisfy the Comprehensive Plan's definition of Prime Farmland.

- “GPO 2.118. Encourage development projects whose outcome will be the significant conservation of farmlands.”

Even though the project is not located on lands defined as “Prime Farmland,” the permanent footprint of the project would convert 93 to 118 acres of land from grazing and rangeland uses to utility uses. However, this reduction would have an overall negligible impact on cattle operations given the county's abundance of pasture and unimproved grazing lands.

Chapter 2: Resource Lands—Commercial Forest Land Use

- “GPO 2.140. Land use activities within or adjacent to commercial forest land should be sited and designed to minimize conflicts with forest management and other activities on commercial forest lands.”

Although forest lands are located to the north and east of the project site, there is no commercial forest land or activities immediately adjacent to the project site. Therefore, impacts on forest management or other activities on commercial forest lands are not anticipated.

Chapter 5 Capital Facilities Plan

- “GPO 5.110B. Electric and natural gas transmission and distribution facilities may be sited within and through areas of Kittitas County both inside and outside of municipal boundaries, UGAs, UGNs, Master Planned Resorts, and Fully Contained Communities, including to and through rural areas of Kittitas County.”

The project would construct an electrical collection system consisting of approximately 23 miles of underground cable and about 2 miles of overhead, single-pole 34.5-kV distribution line in an area that the County designated as Rural in its Comprehensive Plan (Kittitas County 2002a). Therefore, to the extent that the proposed underground cables and overhead lines are considered electrical transmission and/or distribution facilities, the project would be consistent with this policy.

- “GPO 5.120. To recognize the Swiftwater Corridor Vision Plan as a planning tool that provides recommendations for specific strategies to improve, enhance, and sustain the corridor's unique intrinsic qualities and the many enjoyable experiences it offers. Selected projects within the vision plan shall not place additional management policies or regulations on private property or adjacent landowners beyond those that already exist under federal, state, regional, and local plans and regulations.”

The Swift Water Corridor Vision Plan applies to the area along SR 10 that runs along the southern edge of the project area. It is a corridor management plan intended to identify unique and special features within the corridor and to assess eligibility for different types of grants for improvements and enhancements, as well as economic development and tourism programs. This

section of SR 10 is designated on the American Automobile Association's State of Washington map as a scenic route. The plan recognizes that one of the most scenic viewpoints along the corridor is located just west of the intersection of SR 10 and the North Thorp Highway (the North Thorp Highway turns into Hayward Hill Road on the north side of SR 10).

The plan identifies measures to develop improvements and amenities that would enhance the corridor's scenic qualities. In this portion of the corridor, the plan recommends developing a formal scenic vehicle pullout at the bend in the Yakima River (Kittitas County 2002a).

Several short segments of SR 10 lie within 0.5 mile of the closest proposed turbine. Because the highway carries a moderately high level of traffic and has been recognized as having scenic qualities, and because efforts have started to enhance the highway's role as a scenic corridor, the sensitivity of views from the highway toward the project site is considered high. Proposed turbines would be visible on the ridgeline from portions of SR 10 and could degrade the intrinsic qualities of the landscape that make this portion of the corridor unique.

Chapter 6 Utilities

- “GPO 6.7. Decisions made by Kittitas County regarding utility facilities will be made in a manner consistent with and complementary to regional demands and resources.”

Recent national and regional forecasts predict increasing consumption of electrical energy will continue into the foreseeable future, requiring development of new generation resources to satisfy the increasing demand. The Energy Information Administration published a national forecast of electrical power through the year 2025. In it, the administration projected that total electricity demand would grow between 1.8 and 1.9% per year from 2001 through 2025 (U.S. Energy Information Administration 2003).

The WECC forecasts electricity demand in the western United States. According to WECC's most recent coordination plan, the 2001-2011 summer peak demand requirement is predicted to increase at a compound rate of 2.5% per year (WECC 2002).

Based on data published by the NWPCC, electricity demand for the NWPCC's four-state Pacific Northwest planning region (Washington, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana) will grow from 20,080 average megawatts in 2000 to 25,423 average megawatts by 2025 (medium forecast), an average annual growth rate of just less than 1% per year (NWPCC 2003).

In the Pacific Northwest Electric Power Planning and Conservation Act, Congress established that development of renewable resources should be encouraged in the Pacific Northwest (16 USC § 839[1][B]). The Act defines wind power as a renewable resource (§ 839a[16]). The proposed project would rely on wind, a renewable resource, to provide energy to meet current and future regional power demands. Therefore, development of the project would be consistent with GPO 6.7.

- “GPO 6.10. Community input should be solicited prior to county approval of utility facilities which may significantly impact the surrounding community.”

EFSEC is making substantial efforts to solicit community input on the proposed project. As lead agency under SEPA, EFSEC is responsible for including the public early in the EIS process to help identify public issues of concern, establish communication lines, and facilitate trust. Public involvement, consultation, and coordination efforts undertaken by EFSEC for this project are discussed further in Chapter 1, Summary.

- “GPO 6.18. Decisions made regarding utility facilities should be consistent with and complementary to regional demand and resources and should reinforce an interconnected regional distribution network.”

Refer to the discussion of GPO 6.7 regarding the project’s consistency with regional energy demands and resources.

- “GPO 6.21. Avoid, where possible, routing major electric transmission lines above 55 kV through urban areas.”

The only high voltage transmission lines associated with the project would be short (i.e., less than 200 feet long) lines that would interconnect the substations to the existing overhead Bonneville and PSE transmission lines at the transmission level (230 kV or 287 kV for the Bonneville or PSE lines, respectively). No transmission lines are proposed in urban areas.

- "GPO 6.34. Wind Farms may only be located in areas designated as Wind Farm Resource overlay districts in the Comprehensive Plan. Such Wind Farm Resource overlay districts need not be designated as Major Industrial Developments under Chapter 2.5 of the Comprehensive Plan."

The project is inconsistent with GPO 6.34 because the project area is not designated as a Wind Farm Resource overlay district. In June 2003 the Applicant submitted a Comprehensive Plan amendment to Kittitas County to change the land use designation at the project area from Rural to Wind Farm Resource overlay district. Approval of the amendment by the Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners would achieve consistency with this policy.

Kittitas County Zoning Code

The Kittitas County Zoning Code regulates the use and development of property within the unincorporated areas of the county. The KVVPP site contains two zoning designations—Agriculture-20 and Forest and Range. The areas east of US 97 are zoned Forest and Range while those west of US 97 are zoned Agriculture-20.

Permitted uses in the Agriculture-20 zone include residential, agriculture, and forestry practices. The minimum lot size is 20 acres (KCC 17.29.020), while permitted uses in the Forest and Range zone include logging, mining, quarrying, and agricultural practices. Several residential uses are also allowed in the Forest and Range zone including single-family residences, duplexes, and cluster subdivisions (KCC 17.56.020).

Table 3.6-3 summarizes the specific project facilities proposed in the two zoning districts.

Table 3.6-3: Project Facilities by Zoning District

Proposed Project Facilities	
Agricultural-20 Zoning District	Forest and Range Zoning District
Turbine Strings A, B, C, D, and F (43 turbines under middle scenario)	Turbine Strings G, H, I, and J (78 turbines under middle scenario)
Electrical Collection System	Electrical Collection System
Substations and Interconnection Facilities	Access Roads
Access Roads	6 Proposed Meteorological Tower Sites
Three Proposed Meteorological Tower Sites	
O&M Facility	

Source: Sagebrush Power Partners LLC 2003a.

Consistency Discussion

Neither the Agricultural-20 nor Forest and Range zones allow for wind power projects either as a permitted or conditional use. For the project to be considered consistent with the current County Zoning Code, a site-specific rezone of the zoning map to Wind Farm Resource overlay zone pursuant to KCC 17.98 would be required (Kittitas County 2002b).

On May 1, 2003, EFSEC held a land use hearing, pursuant to Chapter RCW 80.50.090 and WAC Chapter 463-26, for the purpose of determining if the proposed project is consistent with Kittitas County or regional land use plans and zoning ordinances. At that hearing, EFSEC determined that: (1) in accordance with WAC 463-26-110, the proposed project is not consistent with nor is it in compliance with Kittitas County land use plans or zoning ordinances, and (2) the Applicant shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve the noncompliance (EFSEC 2003).

In June 2003 the Applicant submitted an application to Kittitas County to rezone the project area from Agriculture-20 and Forest and Range to Wind Farm Resource overlay zone. County approval of this rezone application would result in project consistency with the County Zoning Code.

The Kittitas County Board of County Commissioners will review the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment and rezone and approve them if they satisfy the following criteria: (1) the proposal is essential or desirable to the public convenience; (2) the proposal is not detrimental or injurious to the public health, peace, or safety or to the character of the surrounding neighborhood; and (3) the proposed use at the proposed location(s) will not be unreasonably detrimental to the economic welfare of the County and it will not create excessive public cost for facilities and service (KCC 17.61A).

Other Entities

Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Plan

The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Trust is a private, non-profit organization formed in 1991 to promote protection of a regional greenway. The greenway extends along I-90 from Elk Heights in central Kittitas County to Puget Sound. It is conceived of as a scenic, historic, and recreational

corridor intended to function as a scenic gateway to the Seattle metropolitan area and a pathway to nature for the metropolitan area's population. The plan provides a framework within which the Trust and state and federal agencies have been able to plan and implement measures to acquire, protect, and develop lands along the corridor that provide recreational opportunities and/or protect natural, historic, and scenic resources. However, the plan is not legally binding because local, state, and federal agencies have not adopted it (City of Cle Elum 2001).

Consistency Discussion

In a meeting between the Applicant and representatives of the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Trust, the Trust raised two issues. There were concerns about the potential visibility of the turbines from I-90, which at that time were being proposed for locations on Lookout Mountain. The Trust also asked the Applicant to consider using different paint colors so that the turbines would blend in with their surroundings. After that meeting and in response, in part, to the concerns expressed by the Trust, the Applicant removed the alternative that called for turbines on Lookout Mountain from further consideration (see Section 2.6, Alternatives Considered but Rejected, and Section 3.9, Visual Resources).

Swift Water Corridor Vision Plan

The Swift Water Corridor Vision Plan (Kittitas County 1997a) extends along SR 10 from Ellensburg to Salmon La Sac over a distance of 42 miles. The plan is a planning document that provides recommendations for specific strategies to improve, enhance, and sustain the corridor's unique intrinsic qualities and the many enjoyable experiences it offers.

Consistency Discussion

Refer to the discussion of Comprehensive Plan policy GPO 5.120, above.

3.6.5 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures Proposed by the Applicant

- During project construction, it would be necessary to remove cattle from areas where blasting or heavy equipment operations are taking place. The Applicant proposes to make arrangements with property owners and livestock owners to keep livestock out of these areas during those periods.
- After construction is completed, disturbed areas would be returned as closely as possible to their original state, excluding service and access roads, which would remain in place for the life of the facility.

Additional Recommended Mitigation Measures

In addition to measures proposed by the Applicant and inherent in the project design, the following mitigation measure is recommended to minimize potential conflicts between project construction and operation activities and onsite recreation users:

- In June 2003, DNR and the Applicant executed a lease agreement that would permit the Applicant to construct and operate portions of the proposed wind turbine project on DNR property (DNR 2003). Under the terms of the agreement, DNR's activities on this property, and any grant of rights DNR makes to any person or entity, shall not unreasonably interfere with the construction, installation, maintenance, operation, or removal of the project, access to the project, or the undertaking of other permitted activities allowed by the lease. If DNR determines that potential conflicts between turbine construction and/or operations and existing recreational uses on DNR property would occur, the agency could take steps to limit access to its property. For example, DNR could post appropriate signs on its property limiting public pedestrian and/or vehicle access to portions of the project area during construction or operation.

3.6.6 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The permanent conversion of approximately 93 to 118 acres of rangeland to commercial utility use (i.e., wind energy production) would be an unavoidable impact of the project. However, this reduction would have an overall negligible impact on cattle operations given the county's abundance of pasture and unimproved grazing lands. Therefore, no significant unavoidable adverse impacts are expected for land use as a result of the proposed project construction, operations and maintenance, and decommissioning.