

MITIGATED
DETERMINATION OF NONSIGNIFICANCE

Description of proposal: The construction and operation of a wind turbine energy project that will include up to 76 wind turbines, each turbine will be up to 265 feet tall with blade lengths of up to 100 feet.

Location of proposal will be West of Nine Canyon Road, North of Beck Road and East of Owens Road in Section 12, Township 7 North, Range 29 East, W.M. and Sections 6, 7, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19, Township 7 North, Range 30 East, W.M.

APPLICANT: Energy Northwest
P O Box 968
Richland, WA 99352

FILE NO. EA 01-24

Lead agency BENTON COUNTY

The lead agency for this proposal has determined that it will not have a probable significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c). This decision was made after review of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the lead agency. This information is available to the public on request.

- [X] This mitigated determination of nonsignificance is issued under WAC 197.11.350(3); the specific mitigation measures which will eliminate significant adverse environmental impacts are:
1. To mitigate the possible obstruction of the microwave signals that will cross the proposed turbine location from the Jump Off Joe Butte communication system, the applicant will place the wind turbine towers such that the spacing between towers where the microwave signal passes through is wide enough to provide necessary clearance or rotate the turbine strings so that the wind turbines are no longer in the path.
 2. Maps will be prepared to show sensitive areas (e.g. raptor nest sites, burrowing owls) that may be off-limits during the construction phase depending on the sensitive periods for the species.
 3. Energy Northwest will consult with a Project Biologist prior to finalizing the project layout, including the locations of turbine strings, roads, power lines and other project facilities.
 4. All construction personnel will be instructed to be particularly cautious and drive slower speeds in a period from one hour before sunrise to one hour after sunset when some wildlife species are the most active. Speed limits will be posted on signs throughout the project construction zone. Construction personnel will be given a briefing on sensitive wildlife occurring in the project area, and on required precautions to avoid injuring or destroying wildlife.
 5. Overhead transmission lines from the substation to the Bonneville Power Administration 115-kV system will follow designs recommended by Suggested Practices for Raptor Protection on Power Lines: The State of the Art in 1996 (APLIC, 1996¹). Conductors for the 115-kV line would be spaced approximately 12.5 feet apart to reduce the chance of conductors contacting each other during storms and to eliminate the potential for bird electrocution from contacting two conductors. All overhead transmission structures (34.5 kV collector lines and 115 kV interconnect) located within one (1) mile of the nearest wind turbine will be equipped with anti-perching devices to discourage birds from using locations near the wind plant for perching.
 6. Revegetation plant mixes and monitoring will be developed in consultation with Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife and the landowners. Native vegetation will be used.
 7. Measures to reduce the potential spread of noxious weeds will be developed in consultation with the weed control boards of Benton County. Turbine strings, roads, and other disturbed areas will be monitored regularly to prevent the spread of noxious weeds.
 8. Avian and bat monitoring will be conducted, consisting of 1) fatality monitoring involving standardized carcass searches, scavenging and searcher efficiency trials, 2) a ground nesting survey for owls in suitable habitat within 500 feet of the proposed

turbine strings, roads and power lines in the spring 2001, and within 500 feet of turbine strings in the spring 2002, 3) and ground surveys of large raptor nests and nest habitat identified in the 2000 and 2001 surveys. A detailed monitoring plan will be developed. The monitoring plan includes the establishment of a technical advisory committee (TAC), consisting of the landowners, and representatives from Benton County Planning Department, Energy Northwest, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, U.S. Fish and Wildlife, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon, and consultants conducting the studies. The TAC will be composed of six voting members (one each from Energy Northwest, Lower Columbia Basin Audubon Society, WDFW, USFWS and two landowners). The other committee members will be advisory, including Benton County representatives and the consultants conducting the monitoring programs. The committee will review and finalize the monitoring plan, review annual monitoring results, and recommend amendments to the monitoring protocol to Benton County. Benton County will retain ongoing jurisdictions to 1) modify the project-wide avian and bat monitoring program and 2) require additional avian and bat monitoring, mitigation or possible operation changes. The monitoring plan will include a minimum of one year of intensive standardized fatality monitoring conducted by trained wildlife technicians, subject to modification by the TAC and Benton County. The monitoring plan will also include a procedure for searching for and reporting of wildlife casualties. This monitoring procedure will be conducted by maintenance and other developer personnel for the life of the project. Also included in the monitoring plan will be procedures for handling and rehabilitating injured wildlife. Energy Northwest will develop the procedures in conjunction with a local wildlife rehabilitation center. That procedures will address, as a minimum, the methods and costs of handling and rehabilitation of any project related injured wildlife.

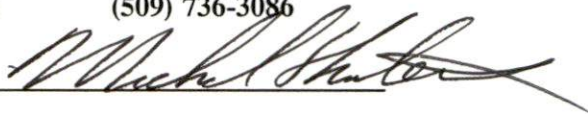
[X] This ^{MDNS} DNS is issued under 197-11-340(2); the lead agency will not act on this proposal for 14 days from the date below. Comments must be submitted by June 4, 2001.

Responsible Official

TERRY A. MARDEN, Director
Benton County Planning & Building Dept.
Post Office Box 910 PHONE: (509) 786-5612
Prosser, WA 99350-0910 (509) 736-3086

Date May 22, 2001

Signature



[X] You may appeal this determination to **TERRY A. MARDEN**, at **Post Office Box 910, Prosser, WA 99350**, no later than June 4, 2001 by **Written notice**.