

EFSEC council votes to recommend approval of Horse Heaven Wind Farm project with conditions

AMENDED RELEASE

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Contact: Karl Holappa
Public Information Officer
karl.holappa@efsec.wa.gov

On February 8, 2021, Scout Clean Energy submitted an Application for Site Certification for the Horse Heaven Project, a wind turbine, solar and BESS facility proposed in Benton County.

On April 17, 2024, the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC) voted 5-2 to recommend approval of the Horse Heaven Wind Farm project at the monthly council meeting.

During the April 17, 2024 Council meeting, EFSEC Chair Kathleen Drew said, “By partially approving the Horse Heaven Wind and Solar project, EFSEC is balancing the need for renewable, clean energy with potential impacts on tribal cultural resources, wildlife, and surrounding communities. We thank the hundreds of community members who took the time to participate and share their opinions on this project.”

EFSEC will submit its formal recommendation package to Governor Inslee before the end of April.

Governor Inslee has 60 days to take one of the following actions:

1. Approve the council recommendation and execute the Site Certification Agreement (SCA)
2. Reject the application
3. Direct the council to reconsider certain aspects of the project and SCA

Multiple opportunities for public comment were provided throughout EFSEC’s review of the application for site certification, and these comments informed the recommendation. Prior to taking its final vote, EFSEC conducted a public comment period on the Draft SCA and Draft Recommendation report from April 1-April 10 and received approximately 970 public comment submissions. Comments received during this final comment period were considered in the final vote.

Administrative relief may be available through a petition for reconsideration, filed within 20 days of the service of the Orders within the Recommendation Package to the Governor. If any such petition for reconsideration is filed, the deadline for answers is 14 days after the date of service of each such petition, see RCW 80.50.100.

Information about this project can be found on EFSEC's website at:
<https://www.efsec.wa.gov/energy-facilities/horse-heaven-wind-project>

EFSEC was created in 1970 to provide “ne stop” siting and permitting for large energy projects. By establishing the council, the state legislature centralized the evaluation and oversight of large energy facilities within one state agency. The legislature cited the necessity of balancing the need for new energy facilities with the broad interests of the public. As part of the balancing process, the council must take into account protection of environmental quality, the safety of energy facilities, and concern for energy availability.

EFSEC became an independent state agency on June 30, 2022. The 2022 Washington State Legislature passed E2SHB 1812 to authorize the change as an important step to achieve Governor Inslee's carbon neutral goals by 2045. The council's responsibilities are listed in chapter 80.50 RCW (Revised Code of Washington).

For facilities under its jurisdiction, EFSEC has been delegated authority by the United States Environmental Protection Agency to issue permits under the Federal Water Pollution Control Act and the Federal Clean Air Act. EFSEC also ensures that effective and coordinated nuclear emergency response plans are in place and satisfactorily tested for the Columbia Generating Station nuclear power plant.

The council body consists of a governor-appointed chair and state agency representatives from the Department of Commerce, Department of Ecology, Department of Fish and Wildlife, Department of Natural Resources (Commissioner of Public Lands), and Utilities and Transportation Commission. Optional membership is extended to local governments, such as county and city representatives, the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, Department of Transportation, and the Military Department on a project-by-project basis.