

# Press Clippings

August 23 – August 29, 2010

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## **KIDK TV – Wind Farm Opponents Want You to Tell County Commissioners to Vote No**

8/24/10

*Danica Lawrence*

BONNEVILLE COUNTY - Wind turbines are popping up across the east Idaho Falls' ridgeline and 75 more could be on their way.

Wednesday night Bonneville County Planning and Zoning commissioners will decide the fate of the Meadows Creek wind farm, which would be built northeast of Idaho Falls just south of Ririe.

Some of those who live within a mile of that location have told the commissioners they are opposed to the wind farm.

They say the turbines are ugly, and use up land that could have been used for recreation.

They also say the wind turbines emit sonic vibrations that can cause health problems.

A group called East Idaho Residents for Responsible Wind Development bought a half-page ad in the Post Register encouraging Bonneville County residents to call county commissioners and urge them to deny Ridgeline energy permission to go ahead with the Meadows Creek project.

## **Brighter Energy – RES to Use Radar-Activated Warning Systems for Wind Farms**

8/24/10

*James Cartledge*

Wind developer RES Americas is to use Wind Turbine Collision Avoidance Systems at wind farms in Oregon and Washington under a new deal.

It has sealed a regional exclusivity deal with Virginia firm OCAS, Inc., to use the systems in the Pacific Northwest as well as parts of Canada.

The OCAS system uses radar to detect approaching aircraft and activates warning lights when necessary.

A secondary audio warning is then delivered to the pilot's radio if the aircraft does not take measures to avoid the turbines.

The OCAS system means that warning lights can be kept off when no aircraft are near, reducing the light pollution from wind farms.

The technology was approved for use by the Federal Aviation Authority last year, and has so far been used to guard power lines in Kentucky.

### **“Confident”**

Gregory Erdmann, Director of Sales for Wind Turbine Solutions at OCAS, said: “With our first North American project currently being deployed in Talbot, Ontario, I am confident that the combination of RES' development and construction experience and OCAS' cutting edge technology will help launch the OCAS concept in the industry.”

More importantly, this will help make the industry and our communities more aware that reducing the visual impact of wind farms is an important and responsible part of wind energy development,” Mr Erdmann added.

Based in Vienna, Virginia, OCAS Inc is a wholly-owned subsidiary of OCAS AS, a Norwegian firm founded in 1999 to devise warning systems to help aircraft avoid power lines.

RES Americas has its corporate office in Broomfield, Colorado, and has more than 4,800MW of wind farms under construction in North America and over 12,500MW capacity in development.

## Oregon Daily Journal of Commerce – Op-Ed: Did the Wind Farm Blow Me Away?

8/24/10

*Nathalie Weinstein*

Despite writing about wind nearly every week, I had never visited a wind farm until today.

I'm currently in Union County interviewing locals about wind farms. In 2007, Horizon Wind Energy developed a 64-turbine wind farm, Elkhorn Valley, along the ridges of Pyles Canyon. Now, Horizon is looking to add up to 164 new turbines in Union County's valley, a project called Antelope Ridge. Opinions on whether wind is a good fit for Union County vary widely, so I had to see one of these developments for myself.

Hearing about a 500-foot-tall wind turbine is one thing. Craning your neck against the morning sun to try and see the top of one of these giants is another. At Elkhorn, I was completely blown away by the sheer enormity of these machines, as well as the noise they make: not much. I'd compare it to hearing an airplane far off in the distance on a windy day.

Though the turbines are fairly self sufficient and outfitted with the latest in wind seeking electronics, 15 employees go to work each day at Elkhorn to keep things running smoothly. Horizon employs three people there while Vestas, the turbine manufacturer, employs 12. Everyone is from Oregon, and most are from Union County itself.

At the base of each turbine is a door leading into the belly of the wind beast. Once inside, a dizzying 500-foot ladder climb brings workers up to the top of the wind turbine, where they can even crawl into the depths of the turbine's blades to perform maintenance. The entire turbine fleet can be controlled wirelessly, so if the development needs to go offline for any reason, operations managers can do so from afar.

The turbines haven't scared off the wildlife. Birds still fly over the rocky hills near Elkhorn, and the operations manager there said that elk can be seen resting in the shade of the turbines.

Whatever one's opinion of wind energy is, it's hard not to be impressed by these machines and the people that work to keep them running.

## **North American Wind Power – Construction Begins on Idaho Wind Project**

8/25/10

*NAW Staff*

Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter, R-Idaho, joined executives of GE and its partners to celebrate the start of construction of the state's largest wind power project. The governor was joined by project investors GE Energy Financial Services, Reunion Power, Exergy Development Group and Atlantic Power Corp., and he signed a turbine blade in Bliss, Idaho.

The 183 MW, 122-turbine project comprises 11 wind farms, spread across 10,000 acres of active and inactive farmland in southern Idaho's Magic Valley. GE's 1.5 MW turbines will be utilized.

The project, initiated by Exergy Development Group and slated for completion by the end of the year, is expected to create 175 construction jobs as well as permanent employment for operations and maintenance.

In addition to the people employed directly, a National Renewable Energy Laboratory model estimates that a wind project of this size would typically support the equivalent of 2,200 full-time jobs in the U.S. for one year - of which about half would be in state - and create 25 permanent jobs.

"The renewable energy industry is breathing new life into the Idaho frontier," says Otter. "We're aggressively harnessing our abundant natural resources for growth because that helps our economy, generating not only electricity, but career opportunities right here at home."

GE Energy Financial Services, Atlantic Power and project developer Exergy own non-managing member equity interests in the nearly \$500 million Idaho Wind project. Reunion Power holds the managing member equity interest and serves as the project's manager.

The wind farms will sell all of its power to Idaho Power Co. under 20-year agreements. Once completed, the portfolio is expected to qualify for the federal Treasury Grant program designed to stimulate renewable energy projects.

Construction of the Idaho project is under way. Workers are delivering wind turbine blades, towers and other components. Workers are also installing foundations and footings for the turbine towers, building access roads, preparing interconnection lines with Idaho Power's grid and readying a site for a new power substation.

## **Idaho Statesman – Huge Wind Project Breaks New Ground for Idaho**

8/25/10

*Rocky Barber*

A 327,000-acre range fire that burned through seven Idaho Power Co. transmission lines couldn't stop energy developers and Gov. Butch Otter from celebrating what could become the largest wind energy project in Idaho.

The fire had forced organizers to move a "blade signing" -- as wind-power developers call a groundbreaking -- from the plateau above Hagerman, where several of the wind turbines will be erected, to the nearby town of Bliss. And even though seven transmission structures and 75 to 100 electric distribution poles were burned in the fire that began Saturday, the blades of an existing wind farm turned in the breeze.

"The very same winds that fanned the brush fire will turn the turbines to produce clean energy," said GE Energy Financial Services President and CEO Alex Urquhart.

GE and its partners, including Boise-based Exergy Development Group, have already begun building the Idaho Wind Partners project -- 11 wind farms along the Oregon Trail from Hagerman to Burley.

The \$500 million project will become Idaho's biggest wind project and one of the largest in the entire Pacific Northwest. Once completed, the 11 farms will be able to generate 183 megawatts, enough to power 39,700 Idaho homes.

The project will create 175 construction jobs, 25 permanent jobs and, using federal Energy Department estimates, will support 2,200 full-time jobs a year nationwide. Eight of those jobs are with Precision Communications, which installed 43 miles of fiber optic cable that connects the wind turbines by computer, so they can be remotely shut on and off and monitored.

Jim Woodhead, president of PreCom, said he's glad Idaho is catching up with its neighbors -- Washington, Oregon and Montana -- which all have more wind generation than Idaho. Once these turbines are completed, they will help make wind power even more reliable across the region.

"The wind is always blowing somewhere," he said.

Otter said the development of the wind industry is the newest chapter in Idaho's long history of creating its own power using renewable sources, starting with the Swan Falls Dam on the Snake River, Idaho Power's first hydroelectric dam.

"The renewable energy industry is breathing new life into the Idaho frontier," said Otter.

The project was made possible by the 2005 federal energy bill, which included a grant to developers who could begin construction by the end of the year.

"This project wouldn't exist save for the federal grant," Urquhart said.

He said more wind projects like this will not be possible unless federal clean energy legislation is passed.

The current program ends at the end of the year.

"Extending that program and other federal incentives would provide the long-term certainty that investors and manufacturers such as GE need to ensure continued expansion of renewable energy throughout the country," he said.

Otter opposed the Obama administration's so-called cap-and-trade energy bill that would have required utilities to cap the amount of carbon they produced while making power and required that a certain percentage of their power comes from renewable energy. But he acknowledged that without government help, Idaho would not have the energy system it has today.

Otter's main opponent, Democrat Keith Allred, said Idaho has a lot more renewable energy that can be developed.

"It's unfortunate that we're not getting more leadership out of Gov. Otter's office in developing those resources," Allred said. "Instead, we're waiting for federal programs to take the lead."

James Carculis, president and CEO of Exergy, which started the wind project, praised Idaho lawmakers and Otter for letting it move forward. The most important action lawmakers can take is to keep the sales tax exemption for renewable energy production in place, he said.

The wind farms will sell all of the power to Idaho Power under 20-year agreements, as required by the Public Utility Regulatory Policies Act of 1978. The law stipulates that these projects' prices are calculated based on how much Idaho Power would pay to get the power elsewhere.

Since its main alternative is natural gas and the price of natural gas has dropped, so has the price the company will pay for wind, solar and geothermal. Idaho Power has more than 200 megawatts of wind power on its system and more than 250 additional megawatts under contract.

When all of these projects are completed along with the others already approved, Idaho Power may have around 800 megawatts of wind on its system in a few years -- that's more than the power produced from the Hells Canyon hydroelectric projects.

Idaho Power is studying how it can better integrate intermittent sources like wind into its system. It says its new Langley Gulch natural gas plant will help.

"We continue to remain focused on developing a balanced resource portfolio," said Idaho Power Senior Vice President of Power Supply Lisa Grow.

The project has given King Hill trucker Gale Anderson a job close to home hauling materials to the construction sites. He's not excited that the projects depend so much on federal money, but he's glad they are producing homegrown wind power.

"They won't let us build nuclear plants and they won't let us build any more dams on the river," Anderson said. "If I'm going to pay for it I might as well get something for it."

## **Local News 8 – Grassroots Group Calls for Moratorium on Wind Farm Proposals**

8/25/10

*Brittany Borghi*

BONNEVILLE COUNTY, Idaho — The Bonneville County Planning and Zoning Commission is set to vote tonight on a proposal by Ridgeline Energy, LLC to construct a new 75-wind turbine facility in the county. But a local group is trying to blow Ridgeline out of town.

The grassroots organization, Idahoans for Responsible Wind Energy (IRWE), said they are in favor of developing wind farms in the area, but not without community input. IRWE is calling for a moratorium on all future proposals for wind energy facilities. A moratorium would allow more people to get informed and get involved, said IRWE spokeswoman Maureen Finnerty.

“We as Idahoans really need to help our local planners take control of this process and make sure that it doesn’t leave us with a legacy of turbines that we’ll live with for the next 300 years,” said Finnerty.

New wind farms may seem like they will open up new jobs, but energy companies like Ridgeline can bring in their own out-of-state employees, said Finnerty. People living near turbines have complained of health issues from the vibrations and noise from turbines as well, and the presence of a farm can send property values plummeting, but one of IRWE’s biggest concerns is maintaining the Gem State’s beautiful horizons, according to Finnerty.

The vote will happen at the County Commission hearing at 6:30 tonight in the Planning and Zoning Hearing Room in Idaho Falls.

## **Local News 8 – Ridgeline Reacts After Wind Farm Denial**

8/26/10

*Hailey Higgins*

BONNEVILLE COUNTY, Idaho -- Ridgeline Energy is taking a step back to regroup after the Bonneville County Planning and Zoning shot down their proposal to build a wind farm.

The energy company wanted to build 75 wind turbines in the area of Meadow Creek on 115 East on the north end of the foothills near Ririe.

Project Manager Randy Gardner said it's too early to do anything right now.

"After they make their decision, then we analyze everything that has occurred and then we determine to go on and appeal or do we go back and file in a different manner. Those are the things we are looking at, at this point," said Gardner.

The Bonneville County Planning and Zoning commissioners were concerned the proposed plan would disrupt the scenic view of the foothills and lower property value in the area.

Ridgeline has ten days to appeal the decision with the county commissioners.

## **KIDK TV – Why Was the Meadow Creek Wind Farm Rejected?**

8/26/10

*Anthony Congi*

BONNEVILLE COUNTY – At the end of last night's Planning and Zoning meeting, Ridgeline Energy learned that its proposed Meadow Creek wind farm was rejected.

Board members debated until nearly midnight, but ultimately decided the main problem with Ridgeline's proposal was that it would not allow future residential development near the project.

"Their argument was that if you have windmills full length along that ridge line, that it creates a fence or a wall that prohibits development from moving through," explains Bonneville County Zoning Administrator, Steve Serr.

During the hearing, board members thought there were issues that needed to be addressed in the ordinance itself. Those issues were taken up in the work session following the hearing.

"I believe that what occurred last night is that they got into the second meeting during the first meeting; and started to debate the merits of wind farms in G-1 grazing and how the ordinance applied to them. As so I think they concentrated more on that than our application itself," said Randy Gardner, Project Manager for Ridgeline Energy.

But does this signal a change in the county's approach to future wind farms?

"What does that mean for companies like Ridgeline? Does it make it easier or harder for them?" I asked Serr.

"I don't know," he replied. "Because the actual parameters of what they're going to modify, that's subject to public hearing, review, edit, rewrite."

"We of course would've preferred that we would have been approved but this doesn't change much. This is going to go on," said Gardner.

So far, Ridgeline is undecided what they'll do next. They could file an appeal within 10 days, or re-file the claim in a different manner.

As far as changing the ordinance goes, Ridgeline feels that they submitted their application with the current ordinance; and it should be reviewed under the current one.

And if the county want to change it, Ridgeline says it should be a separate issue.

## **North American Wind Power – Americans are Using Less Conventional Energy, More Wind**

8/26/10

*NAW Staff*

The U.S. used significantly less coal and petroleum in 2009 than in 2008 and significantly more wind power, according to energy flow charts released by the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL). There also was a decline in natural-gas use and an increase in the use of solar, hydro and geothermal power.

The estimated U.S. energy use in 2009 equaled 94.6 quadrillion BTUs, down from 99.2 quadrillion BTUs in 2008.

Wind power increased dramatically in 2009 to .70 quadrillion BTUs of primary energy, compared to .51 in 2008. Most of that energy is tied directly to electricity generation and thus helps decrease the use of coal for electricity production.

"The increase in renewables is a really good story, especially in the wind arena," says A.J. Simon, an LLNL energy systems analyst who develops the energy flow charts using data provided by the Department of Energy's Energy Information Administration. "It's a result of very good incentives and technological advancements. In 2009, the technology got better, and the incentives remained relatively stable. The investments put in place for wind in previous years came online in 2009. Even better, there are more projects in the pipeline for 2010 and beyond."

The significant decrease in coal used to produce electricity can be attributed to three factors: overall lower electricity demand, a fuel shift to natural gas and an offset created by more wind power production, according to Simon.

Carbon emissions data are expected to be released later this year.

## **Whitman County Gazette – Impact of New Wind Farm Assessed**

8/26/10

*Joe Smillie*

Whitman County Planner Alan Thomson officially determined Tuesday that First Wind's proposed wind farm in north Whitman County would have a significant environmental impact.

Thomson's ruling under the State Environmental Policy Act kicks off a 21-day period in which the public can comment on the company's proposal.

First Wind has asked the county permission to erect up to 55 wind turbines on approximately 5,000 acres of land on Naff Ridge, west of Oakesdale and south of Rosalia.

Thomson's ruling means the company will have to prepare a detailed environmental impact statement, or EIS, for the project.

First Wind offered to go through the EIS process when they submitted their application. The public is invited to comment on what should be studied in the EIS.

Thomson directed the company to study the following issues: erosion, air quality, drainage and runoff, bird and ground animals, noise both during construction and operations, shadows, visual impacts, cultural resources, transportation needs and needs for public services.

Suggestions from citizens must be submitted to the county planning office no later than 5 p.m. Sept. 16.

After the comment period closes, the county will prepare a draft EIS, which will be sent out to all who requested one.

## **La Grande Observer – Wind Farm Advisory Vote Decision to Come Next Week**

8/27/10

*Bill Rautenstrauch*

If nothing else was clear following the close of Union County's Antelope Ridge Wind Farm advisory vote hearing Wednesday, this was: people who love windmills generally don't want the vote, and those not so fond of them, do.

In a packed-to-the-walls Misener Conference Room, the county board of commissioners listened for an hour-and-a-half as people gave their ideas on the potential vote, and threw in their opinions about Horizon Wind Energy's proposed, 300-megawatt wind farm near Union.

"I'm against the vote and for the windmills," said Leslie Posey of Union. "We're property owners and I feel we should be able to put them on our property if we want."

Others see it differently.

"We have the right to not have neighbors who damage our setting," said Marcella Pratt of Summerville as she testified in favor of the vote and against windmill impacts.

The county board of commissioners is trying to decide whether to use the ballot box this November to poll the public on the wind farm issue, even though the state and not the county will decide whether Horizon may build the facility, and even though the vote would not be binding on anyone.

At that, the purpose of the potential vote has become less clear with every session of the county's hearing.

In the beginning, wording on the proposed ballot question concerned itself with whether the board of commissioners should adopt a formal position for or against the project.

But in the second session of the hearing last week, county counsel Brandon Eyre advised the board of commissioners against taking a position because Horizon's application will be judged on objective standards by the state's Energy Facility Siting Council.

Eyre said he wasn't against the idea of an advisory vote, but suggested a ballot question that shifts focus from the county board to the desires of Union County citizens.

Then Wednesday night, a letter from local attorney Janie Burcart was read into the record. Burcart said she doesn't think the county has authority to place an advisory vote on the ballot at all.

“Like all Oregon counties, Union County has the authority of referendum, but the referendum power has been historically understood to be limited to the approval or rejection of laws, not the giving of advice to public officials,” Burcart said.

Still, the hearing went on, with people peppering their testimony with opinions about the possible negative or positive effects of windmills on the community.

Those concerned with impacts on scenery, property values and wildlife tended to favor the vote, while those concerned with business, economic health, property rights and green energy mostly said the state siting process is adequate and no local advisory vote is necessary.

That’s been the tone of the hearing from the beginning. Still, there were a few new wrinkles last night.

Willard Bertrand, for instance, said he agrees with Eyre that the vote should reflect the desires of citizens, that the county board itself shouldn’t take a position.

Then he said the board should go a few steps further, polling the public not just on a general question, but on specific wind farm issues.

“There are several things that should be on the ballot,” he said. As one example, he cited lights on turbines.

Sushil Kumar, owner of a La Grande motel, also offered rare testimony. He was one of only a few who said he hopes the project goes forward, but wants an advisory vote just the same.

“You should get the opinion of every individual,” he said.

The issue of property rights came up more than a few times. Though several people testifying said landowners should be able to lease their property to Horizon if they choose, others said the property rights issue isn’t so simple.

“If I burn garbage in my woodstove, people downwind of me should have a say,” said Kevin March of La Grande.

During the second part of the advisory vote hearing Aug. 18, Dennis Wilkinson, chair of the anti-wind farm group Friends of the Grande Ronde Valley, presented the board with a petition calling for a vote signed by 250 people.

In a counter move Wednesday night, Steven Summers presented a petition against the vote signed by 220 people. As he delivered the document, Summers said he thinks the proposed \$600 million project is vital to the economy.

“We need the jobs and the money,” he said.

Following Wednesday night's session, the board adjourned without deliberating on the potential vote.

Chairman Mark Davidson said that during its regular session next Wednesday the board will decide whether to put a question on the November ballot.

## **Bellingham Herald – Bellingham-Based Company Receives Grant and Loan to Build Community Wind Turbines**

8/27/10

*Dave Gallagher*

Cascade Community Wind Co. has been awarded a \$1 million grant and loan from the Washington State Energy Program to help install eight community wind turbines throughout Washington over the next year.

The company will install two small wind turbines this fall in Kittitas County; the other six turbines will be installed before December 2011.

Cascade Community Wind is a Bellingham-based company that provides wind energy projects in Washington. For more information, see [cascadecommunitywind.com](http://cascadecommunitywind.com).

## **North American Wind Power – OMSI, Iberdrola Host Wind Power Event**

8/27/10

*NAW Staff*

Sen. Ron Wyden, D-Ore., and Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., spoke of the importance of creating green jobs in the Northwest at the Wind Power Works! event at the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry (OMSI).

OMSI teamed up with Iberdrola Renewables to host the event, which was designed to expose state residents to the science and technology that is supporting renewable energy in the Northwest.

"New wind turbines spinning away across the state mean jobs for Oregonians, a boost for local economies and clean energy for consumers," says Blumenauer. "Thanks to the commitment of our industry partners, educators and local leaders, Oregon is becoming a national model for renewable energy development."

The Wind Power Works! event, which ends today, features a mini version of Iberdrola's control center that monitors weather and wildlife activity, rescued raptors from Blue Mountain Wildlife and mini turbine models for testing wind energy generation.