

Chapter 4 Cumulative Impacts

A “cumulative impact” is the impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of an action, such as this proposed action, when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can also result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time (40 CFR 1508.7).

Implementation of the proposed project (phases 1 and 2) may establish a precedent of wind energy development in the Condon area that could facilitate the development of additional wind projects in the study area and vicinity, or in the Condon area. However, at this time, no other wind projects are planned in these areas. If future additional wind projects were to be developed in the study area, project vicinity, or Condon area, and the same siting criteria were applied as were used for the proposed project (such as avoiding wetlands and unstable slopes, and avoiding local avian flightways), then development of future projects would not be expected to cause significant adverse cumulative impacts to the environment.

One of the most noticeable changes in the project area resulting from the proposed project would be the change in the “visual landscape” with the placement of the project’s 83 wind turbines (phases 1 and 2). However, the nature and importance of this change is subjective, since some people may find wind turbines an interesting feature (and welcomed as “green power”), while others may find them to be a visual nuisance. If additional wind projects were to be developed in the project area in the future (although none are planned at this time), the cumulative impact of having the visual landscape further altered by the placement of additional turbines would need further evaluation at that time.

In addition to the visual changes from the proposed project, a less noticeable but nonetheless important impact from the project would be bird or bat mortality from collisions with the turbine blades, the support towers, and the meteorological towers and associated guy wires. Although no future projects are planned at this time, if this does occur, avian and bat mortality would be an area of potential cumulative impacts that would need further evaluation at that time.