



## Department of Energy

Bonneville Power Administration  
1520 Kelly Place  
Walla Walla, Washington 99362

October 22, 2001

In reply refer to: PTS/Walla Walla

### **To: People Interested in the Maiden Wind Farm**

Washington Winds Inc. is proposing to build a new wind energy facility north of Prosser in Benton and Yakima Counties, Washington. Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) is proposing to purchase some or all of the electrical output from the project and provide transmission on its existing lines. This letter summarizes comments we received in June and July when the project was first announced and we held a meeting in Prosser.

### **Proposed Project**

Washington Winds proposes to build and operate a wind generation facility on mostly private land north of Prosser, Washington (see attached map). The facility would have the capacity to generate from 150 up to 494 megawatts (MW) of power (one MW of wind power can provide electricity for 250 homes).

There is a relationship between the number, height, and spacing of turbines: as the size of turbines increases, the spacing between them increases, and the number needed decreases. Washington Winds has not yet chosen the turbine models, so exact numbers, distances, and heights are not yet known. The range of turbine designs being considered would produce from 900 to 2,000 kilowatts of power each (1000 kilowatts is equal to one MW). If the largest turbines were used, 75 to 247 turbines would be needed; with the smaller turbines, 167 to 549 would be needed. Turbines would be placed in strings (or rows) with 250 to 450 feet between each turbine in a string. The total turbine height, including the rotor blades, would be from 246 to 390 feet tall.

Power from the turbines would be collected by underground and overhead electric cables. The first 150 MW would be transmitted to a 4-acre substation located near BPA's transmission lines that cross the project area. If full build-out occurs, a second substation in the eastern portion of the study area would be built, and a 4-mile transmission line would be constructed to connect to one of BPA's transmission lines. The power would then be transferred to either the Hanford-John Day 500-kilovolts (kV) or the Midway-Big Eddy 230-kV transmission line. The project could also connect some of its power to BPA's Midway-Grandview 115-kV transmission line, which runs just west of the project area.

The project would require 18 to 60 miles of access roads and one to three operation and maintenance facilities. Washington Winds would like to begin construction in spring or summer of 2002, with commercial operation starting in late 2002. The project would operate for at least 20 years.

### **Environmental Analysis**

As a Federal agency, BPA must study the environmental impacts, both adverse and beneficial, of this proposed project before it can take action. This policy is set out in the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 that requires potential environmental impacts of a proposed action to be made public before decision-making. Environmental impacts will be discussed in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The EIS will also satisfy the requirements of the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA).

**Public Comments**

In June we asked for comments on the proposal to help us develop the environmental study. We held a public meeting, and asked people to phone, write, or e-mail any comments. We received 26 written responses as well as comments received at the public meeting. In all, over 300 comments covering all aspects of the project and the EIS were received. People generally supported wind power, but wanted to know more about this project and how it works in the regional energy system.

Sixty-five comments sought information about the proposed project and BPA's role. For example, people asked if wind power is economical; if the power would be sold to California; and if the project would affect any of the natural gas plants planned in the region. Questions about ownership of land where the project would be built, and whether the turbines would be removed after their useful life were also heard.

Environmental topics attracted 125 comments. The category receiving most comments was vegetation and wildlife. Of particular interest was how the project would affect birds and elk, the introduction of noxious weeds, and the loss of shrub steppe habitat. BPA, in consultation with the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, originally planned a three-season avian study to help assess potential impacts to birds in the project area. As a response to comments received, BPA will continue the avian studies through the fourth season (winter).

Socioeconomic issues received 23 comments focusing on benefits to the local economy through jobs, property taxes, and landowner benefits. The EIS will include an analysis estimating income to counties from increased property taxes, and local employment numbers and duration.

Eleven comments were received on the visual impacts of the project. Most were concerned that the project would "ruin the view." Visual simulations are being developed and will be included in the EIS.

**How We Use the Comments**

All the comments we received will help shape the analysis in the EIS. The comments have helped us to identify the key issues to be addressed in the EIS, as well as the impacts of most concern. Everyone who commented has been added to the project mail list.

**Project Schedule and Next Steps**

Because we have decided to conduct a fourth season of avian studies, the EIS schedule has been extended. We plan to have a Draft EIS ready for public review in January. Please fill out and return the enclosed postcard to let us know if you would like to receive the entire EIS (around 250 pages), the summary (around 25 pages), or a copy by electronic mail. Even if you don't return the postcard, we will let you know when the Draft EIS is available.

If you have any questions about the proposal, please call me toll-free at 1-866-879-2303, call me direct at 509-527-6211, or send an e-mail to [trosborn@bpa.gov](mailto:trosborn@bpa.gov). Thank you for your interest in our work.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Osborn  
Project Manager

Enclosures: Map  
Postcard

**BENTON COUNTY PLANNING/BUILDING DEPARTMENT**

**TERRY A. MARDEN, DIRECTOR**

PLANNING  
PLANNING ANNEX  
P O BOX 910, 1002 DUDLEY AVENUE  
PROSSER, WA 99350  
PROSSER OFFICE: (509) 786-5612  
FROM TRI-CITIES: (509) 736-3086  
FAX: (509) 786-5629

BUILDING  
KENNEWICK ANNEX  
5600 W. CANAL PLACE, STE. C 105A  
KENNEWICK, WA 99336  
TRI-CITIES OFFICE: (509) 735-3500  
FROM PROSSER: (509) 786-5622  
FAX NUMBER: (509) 736-2732

May 3, 2001

Richard Anderwald  
Director  
Yakima County Planning  
128 N. 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, Room 417  
Yakima, WA 98901

RE: Assumption of lead agency status for the Maiden Wind Project.

Dear Mr. Anderwald,

The Benton County Planning Department has received a conditional use permit application from Washington Wind Project. The application is for the installing of approximately 167 NEG Micon NM 900/52 wind turbines and associated equipment and facilities to generate approximately 150 MW of power. Most of the project will be located within Benton County. A portion of the project will be located in Yakima County in Section 11, 12, and 13 of Township 11 North, Range 23 East.

Since the greatest portion of the proposed project is located within Benton County, the Benton County Planning Department will assume SEPA Lead Agency status for this proposal. The Bonneville Power Administration will also consider this proposal under NEPA.

I have been working with Greg Ballard from your department to obtain the needed mailing list for Yakima County. I will keep Mr. Ballard informed on the progress of the environmental review for the proposal. I have attached a copy of the Conditional Use Permit Application and Environmental Checklist submitted to Benton County.

If you have any questions or wish to discuss this matter, please contact me at (509) 786-5612.

Sincerely,

  
Michael Shuttleworth, Senior Planner

cc.

Greg Ballard, Yakima County  
Barbara Ritchie, DOE  
Sarah T. Branum, BPA  
Connie Thoman, CH2M Hill  
Rick S. Koebbe, Power Works Inc.

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## **DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF EIS**

Description of proposal is to install 167 to 549 wind turbines and associated equipment and facilities to generate approximately 150 to 494 MW of electrical power. The wind turbines are rated for 900kW each and stand 75 meters/246 feet tall at their highest point (a 52 meter rotor atop a 49 meter tower); however, turbine sizes up to 1.650 kW which stand 113 meters/380 feet (a 66 meter rotor atop a 80 meter tower) maybe considered. Major equipment and facilities that will also be installed include: one or more permanent met towers, step-up transformers at each wind turbine, underground and overhead medium voltage distribution and communications lines, a 230 kV substation and BPA transmission line interconnection equipment, an operation and maintenance facility and request access roads.

Proponent **Washington Winds, Inc.**  
**5356 N Cattail Way**  
**Boise, Idaho 83703**

File No. **EA 01-28**

**Location of proposal:** Located primarily in Benton County, Washington, 15 miles north of Prosser, and, to a lesser extent, in Yakima County Washington, 10 miles northeast of Sunnyside. The proposed site is located on the southwestern slopes of the Rattlesnake hills, which includes: portions of Sections 7,8,9,10,14,15,16,17,18,22,23,24,25,26,35,36 of Township 11 North, Range 24 East, Benton County; portions of Sections 28,30,31,33, of Township 11 North, Range 25 East, Benton County; and portions of Sections 3, 10, 11, 12, 13 of Township 11 North, Range 23 East, Yakima County; State of Washington, Department of Natural Resources public lands include portions of Sections 16 and 36, of Township 11 North, Range 24 East, Benton County; road access involves portions of Sections 14, 19, 20, 29, 30 of Township 11 North, Range 24 East, Benton County and portions of Sections 23, 24, 25, 26, 35, 36, of Township 11 North, Range 23 East, Yakima, County.

Lead agencies **BONNEVILLE POWER ADMINISTRATION and BENTON COUNTY**

The lead agencies have determined this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c) and the National Environmental Policy Act. An environmental checklist or other materials indicating likely environmental impacts can be reviewed at our office.

The lead agencies have identified the following areas for discussion in the EIS as being noise, visual, soils, unique physical features, plants and animal, habitat for and the diversity of species of plants, other wildlife, aesthetics, historic and cultural preservation, agricultural crops, transportation, lighting and air traffic.

**SCOPING.** Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS. You may comment on alternatives, mitigation measures, probable significant adverse impacts, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. The method and deadline

for giving us your comments is as follows: A public scoping meeting will be conducted on June 26, 2001, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. at the Prosser Senior Center – 1231 Dudley Avenue, Prosser, WA 99350. Written information will be available at the meeting and staff will be present to answer questions and accept oral and written comments on the proposed scope of the Draft EIS. Written comments may be submitted to the Benton County Planning Department P O Box 910, Prosser, WA 99350 – by 5 p.m. on July 11, 2001.

Responsible Official: Terry A. Marden, Director  
Benton County Planning/Building Dept.  
P O Box 910  
Prosser, WA 99350

Date **June 11, 2001**

Signature



You may appeal this determination to **TERRY A. MARDEN**, at the Benton County Planning Department **Post Office Box 910, Prosser, WA 99350**, no later than 5 p.m. Tuesday, June 19, 2001 by **Written notice**.

You should be prepared to make specific factual objections.

Contact Michael Shuttleworth, Senior Planner – Benton County Planning Department P O Box 910 Prosser, WA 99350 to read or ask about the procedures for SEPA appeals.

There is no agency appeal.

PUBLISH: Monday, June 11, 2001

**DISTRIBUTION: Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on Scope of EIS sent to Applicant, Property Owners and News Media on 6/6/01. The Determination of Significance and Request for Comments on Scope of the EIS and EA sent to agencies on 6/6/01.**

**Applicant**

**Listing of Agencies (See attached listing)**

**Property Owners**

**News Media**