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## Renewable Northwest Project Responds to Recent Oregonian Articles Critical of Wind Energy

Recent, negative stories and editorials in the Oregonian<sup>1</sup> concerning wind energy development prompted RNP to prepare some talking points to use when asked questions about wind energy development, how it is sited, and its impact on rural communities.

### On Economic Development:

New renewable energy projects are more than just important economic development, they are partners in building communities. Wind projects have helped support local schools, fire districts and other essential services. There are also several North American headquarters for major wind energy companies in the state.

Oregon was recently ranked by the Pew Research Center as #1 in the nation in green jobs per capita.

Oregon currently has 1,834 MW of wind projects in operation or under construction and another 3,665 MW in the pipeline. This 5,500 MW total is enough power about 1.3 million homes. 5,500 MW of existing and planned projects are estimated to provide:

- \$9 billion in total investment
- \$717 million in property taxes and community service fees
- Between \$57 - \$115 million in landowner payments annually
- 445 project operations and maintenance jobs
- 8,250 construction jobs

### On Property Values:

In December 2009, the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL) published a comprehensive, multi-site analysis regarding the impact of wind power projects on residential property values in the United States. The report concludes that, "***no evidence is found that home prices surrounding wind facilities are consistently, measurably, and significantly affected by either the view of wind facilities or the distance of the homes to those facilities.***"

### On State Policy:

Oregon's 25% by 2025 Renewable Energy Standard, and our Business Energy Tax Credit, are key to maintaining Oregon's leadership in the renewable energy economy. Investment in new renewable energy generation is critical to economic growth, fight global warming and preserve our unique quality of life in Oregon. renewable energy development ensures that communities can count on jobs,

<sup>1</sup> Wind Farm Faces Fight

[http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2010/03/fighting\\_wind\\_farms\\_in\\_oregon.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/environment/index.ssf/2010/03/fighting_wind_farms_in_oregon.html)

Pacific Power Seeks Twenty Percent Hike.

[http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2010/03/pacific\\_power\\_seeks\\_20\\_percent\\_1.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/business/index.ssf/2010/03/pacific_power_seeks_20_percent_1.html)

That Priceless View Might Just be for Sale

[http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/03/that\\_priceless\\_view\\_might\\_just.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/opinion/index.ssf/2010/03/that_priceless_view_might_just.html)

economic development, and a bright future; utilities can count on stable-priced, clean power; and consumers can feel good about the legacy they are leaving future generations.

### **Wildlife & Habitat Issues:**

Oregon has a strong and positive record on wind and wildlife issues. The state siting process requires project developers to go through a rigorous review before any project can be constructed. Most developers apply a set of voluntary guidelines developed by a diverse group of advocates, industry and agencies. Those guidelines include substantial data collection about potential impacts before construction, avoidance of impacts where possible, and mitigation otherwise.

### **Visual Analysis:**

It is common practice for a wind energy project developer to include a comprehensive, professional visual resource analysis as part of the EFSC or local, county permitting process. A visual resource analysis produces images of how the project will appear to the naked eye from a variety of different vantage points and distances. The value of this analysis is for the developer, the permitting authority and other stakeholders (including local residents) to understand how the project will appear visually to the local community. Opinion regarding the visual impact of a project is typically in the eye of the beholder.

### **Noise:**

Well-designed utility scale wind turbines are generally quiet in operation. Wind plants are always located where the wind speed is higher than average, and the "background" sound of the wind will often "mask" any sound that might be produced by operating wind turbines - especially because the turbines only run when the wind is blowing. Current turbine designs effectively reduce mechanical sound through sound proofing, therefore, the aerodynamic sound, often described as a "whooshing" sound, is what can normally be heard. In the range of 35 to 45 dbA, at a distance of 350 meters, sound produced by wind turbines is similar to the background sound found in a typical home. Oregon's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has implemented a noise standard specifically for wind projects.

### **Health:**

Wind energy is a clean energy source that provides communities with decreased greenhouse gas emissions and air quality improvements and corresponding human health benefits. Any concern that wind turbines may impact someone negatively should be explored.

In early 2009, the American and Canadian Wind Energy Associations (AWEA and CanWEA) established a scientific advisory panel to conduct a review of current literature available on the issue of perceived health effects of wind turbines. The panel reached the following conclusions:

- There is no evidence that the audible or sub-audible sounds emitted by wind turbines have any direct adverse physiological effects.
- The ground-borne vibrations from wind turbines are too weak to be detected by, or to affect, humans
- The sounds emitted by wind turbines are not unique. There is no reason to believe, based on the levels and frequencies of the sounds and the panel's experience with sound exposures in occupational settings, that the sounds from wind turbines could plausibly have direct adverse health consequences.