

Crook County Testimony on HB 2329
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Thursday, February 28, 2019

I am Ann Beier, Crook County Community Development Director. On behalf of Crook County, I'd like to encourage you to support HB 2329 relating to siting renewable energy facilities.

Crook County has granted land use approvals for six commercial solar facilities ranging from in size from 180 acres to just over 300 acres. These projects benefit from existing utility infrastructure. Property owners benefit from leasing or selling marginal (at best) agricultural land for renewable energy production. The County hosts the state's largest (to date) solar facility – Avangrid's Gala facility.

Oregon Counties have been implementing Oregon's land use programs for over forty years. Counties across the state are adept at siting renewable energy and other large scale developments.

Although counties across Oregon may have differing standards for reviewing renewable energy projects, all counties provide an opportunity for county residents to participate in public hearings before local decision makers.

Crook County has developed specific siting standards for renewable energy projects in addition to requirements of Oregon's land use laws. These standards are summarized in Attachment A. While these standards are consistent with the Energy Facility Siting Council's standards, they also go beyond and reflect local concerns such as requiring sign-off from the local weed master, road master and emergency management professionals.

Crook County conducts pre-application meetings with all developers and meets on-site with the applicants and natural resource professionals. We include representatives from the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Fish and Wildlife and local agencies to help them get an understanding of the project. This has proved to be really effective by identifying concerns early in the process. Issues are generally resolved before public hearings are conducted.

Despite a rigorous review process, Crook County's process generally takes from three to six months. County land use processes are well established, predictable, and effective. Counties can issue timely decisions for project developers while ensuring that local concerns are addressed in a fair and effective manner. Crook County supports HB 2329 and the opportunity for renewable energy projects to be sited efficiently and effectively at the local level. I would be pleased to answer any questions you might have.

ATTACHMENT A – Summary of Renewable Energy Siting Standards
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Crook County adopted siting standards for wind and solar energy projects in 2010 (Crook County Code 18.161). The County requires that each application include a project overview (layout, construction schedule, acreage, transmission line route...), evidence of an active utility transmission interconnect and specific findings that the proposed project will not conflict with existing agricultural uses. In addition, applications must include:

- a transportation impact analysis or traffic impact letter;
- a wildlife impact and monitoring plan for systems impacting inventoried wildlife resources identified in County's comp plan; a description of potential impacts to wildlife (goal 5 inventoried wildlife;, Federal and state T&E species, raptors, bats);
- an emergency management plan;
- an erosion control plan (may include a statement from the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality regarding whether or not a stormwater permit is required);
- a weed control plan (usually with a site visit by the County weedmaster to minimize spread of noxious weeds)
- a description of potential impacts to wetlands and streams;
- a dismantling and decommissioning plan;
- a socio-impact assessment of the project – impact on public services, jobs, cultural, visual, and recreational issues.

There are also criteria for setbacks and requirements to address glare, public safety, proximity to airports, use of cleaning supplies and chemicals, access, and general requirement that electrical cables are buried.

A decommissioning bond or other financial security required for the duration of the project.