

Morrow County Testimony on HB 2329
House Committee on Energy and Environment
Tuesday, March 5, 2019

I am Carla McLane, Morrow County Planning Director, and in this role I want to encourage your support of House Bill 2329 relating to siting renewable energy facilities.

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. As you can see from the attached table counties across Oregon have approved projects, both wind and solar, some with additional standards while others use in place conditional use criteria along with the standards found for both wind and solar projects that have been adopted by the Land Conservation and Development Commission (see also the submitted Siting Standards).

Morrow County has not to date developed additional siting standards for renewable energy projects, but have since the first application for a wind energy facility applied in place conditional use permit criteria broadly to capture various concerns that a renewable energy facility might generate. Highlighted on the final page of the submitted Siting Standards are three criteria that have been used to address noise from wind energy facilities, air quality concerns from aggregate operations, glare from solar facilities, and wildlife concerns. As part of the application process Morrow County holds a pre-application meeting with the developer inviting our local Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist, our Weed Manager and representatives from our Public Works and the Oregon Department of Transportation. In this way we work to proactively address species, habitat and project impacts in a holistic manner.

Counties have a statutory responsibility to approve this type of permit within 150 days, a time line that also must include local appeals. Our experience in Morrow County indicates that is an achievable objective, usually completing the process on land zoned Exclusive Farm Use in 60 to 90 days. With the Goal 3 Exceptions process necessary for solar development an additional 45 days is needed to accomplish the action before the Board of Commissioners including the necessary adoption process. This local public process has provided opportunity for local concerns to be heard and addressed in a timely manner.

Morrow County is heavily impacted by the military being home to the Navel Weapons Systems Training Facility (NWSTF) Boardman, over half of the original Umatilla Army Depot, and a portion of the Redhawk Military Operations Area (MOA). This has required engagement by Morrow County staff with representatives from the Navy, Army and Air Force. Both the NWSTF Boardman and the Umatilla Army Depot are also used by the Oregon Military Department (OMD). Based on this military presence, coupled with renewable energy development, saw Morrow County create the Military Economic Advisory Committee, originally the Military Airspace Advisory Committee, back in 2013 to address any number of concerns. The focus for several years has been renewable energy and related infrastructure, particularly transmission lines.

Morrow County appreciates your time and consideration of HB 2329. This legislation as originally proposed provides an opportunity for renewable energy projects to be sited efficiently and effectively at the local level.