

County commissioners approve new wind power rules

By SAMANTHA TIPLER East Oregonian | Posted: Tuesday, June 28, 2011 5:56 pm

After years of work and months of meetings, the Umatilla County commissioners approved changes to the county's rules deciding where and how wind farms can be built.

Commissioners voted just before 5 p.m., after yet another daylong meeting of debating and hearing testimony.

To include the last sticking points, commissioners broke their approval down into three separate votes.

They unanimously agreed on two out of three.

The first was an approval to set aside the Walla Walla River watershed as a protected area. All three commissioners approved it.

The second was to approve all the changed rules, except the setback for rural homes. All three commissioners also approved that.

Like in so many meetings before, the setback was the divisive issue.

Commissioners Dennis Doherty and Larry Givens approved of the two-mile distance between a rural home and a wind turbine.

They referenced the flood of opinions and information they had received during previous meetings, as well as wanting to be cautious in planning for the county's future, for their reasons.

Commissioner Bill Hansell did not agree.

He preferred more study into the setback issue, or, if not that, a one-mile distance.

Hansell worried the two-mile setback would close Umatilla County's doors to wind power development. He also worried it could be used as a weapon between quarreling landowners.

The two-mile setback passed. Givens and Doherty voted for it, Hansell voted against. County commissioners approve new wind power rules

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