

Letter: Commissioner urged not to side with wind industry

East Oregonian

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The Umatilla County Board of Commissioners said they wanted science to make their decision on changing the industrial wind turbine siting amendments. Unbiased science was given to them by members of the Umatilla County Planning Commission the BOC appointed to represent Umatilla County citizens. This information can be found on the county website. The planning commissioners took 33 months to gather and understand all of it before making their unanimous decision.

The rules the Energy Facility Siting Council must follow are worse than inadequate. If you read the East Oregonian article on the EFSC hearing dated 5/20/2011, the members themselves were uncomfortable with the decision they had to make allowing an amendment to the Helix Wind Project. It more than doubles the original project size without any more study, adding 134 new turbines to the original 60. It also takes an additional 13,000 acres, most of it high-value farm ground.

EFSC rules are deficient when it comes to protecting you and your neighbors for two reasons. They were developed in the early days of turbine development for much smaller turbines. Second, the rules have been constantly reinforced that they are adequate by the wind developers and our own green agenda-driven state government officials.

Are we really willing to risk our water resources, the lifeblood of our county's main economy and our communities? Is the building of more turbine projects honestly the only way to put money into our budgets? Are there no other businesses worth investing in to create real, permanent jobs? Has anyone even tried?

It's time to stop the whispers in the ears of our elected leaders by the wind industry: "But what about the money?" It's time to stop putting our hard-earned tax dollars into the hands of the industry that is contributing to the demise of our education system, our safety net for the elderly and disabled and the disintegration of our once close-knit rural communities, now divided.

I haven't heard of anyone being asked if they want to live next to an industrial power development. Who would have dreamed in rural Oregon we would be faced with the possibility of such a development being allowed? For the decision on the wind siting amendment to be such a tough sell to the county commissioners, it looks more politically motivated than scientifically based.

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