

# Tri-City Herald



LOCAL

## Huge Eastern WA wind farm project near Tri-Cities could be cut in half under new proposal

Gov. Jay Inslee will have the final say on the Horse Heaven project.

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*KENNEWICK, WA*

The number of huge wind turbines proposed for the hills south of the Tri-Cities could be cut by half or more under a proposal being considered by a Washington state siting council.

Many of the turbines that [may be eliminated from the project](#) are those most visible from the Tri-Cities.

Scout Clean Energy is proposing up to [244 wind turbines](#) that would be 500 feet tall or an alternate plan with fewer, but taller turbines. Then there would be 150 turbines with blades extending about 670 feet high, which is taller than the Seattle Space Needle.

The [Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center](#) would cover 112 square miles stretching from south of Finley to south of Benton City, although the developed area of the project would cover only about 10 square miles.

The [Washington state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council](#), or EFSEC, will meet in January and could finalize its recommendation to Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee to meet a Jan. 31 deadline for a council decision. Public comment is expected to be accepted before the meeting.

Inslee is not bound to accept the council's recommendation.

His other options could include denying the application for the project, approving it as proposed by Scout Clean Energy or remanding the recommendation to EFSEC for further revisions within 60 days, according to Tri-Cities CARES, a group opposing the wind farm as too close to the Tri-Cities.

As proposed by Scout Clean Energy, turbines would line the Horse Heaven ridgeline from south of Kennewick for 24 miles to south of Benton City and would be seen from many areas of Richland, Kennewick and Pasco, according to Tri-Cities CARES.

Between the proposed Horse Heaven wind farm as proposed and the nearby and smaller Nine Canyon wind farm, just over 100,000 residents of Benton County would live within six miles of a turbine, according to Tri-Cities CARES

That's five times more than the estimated 20,000 people who live within six miles of a [wind farm across the rest of Washington state](#), according to the group.

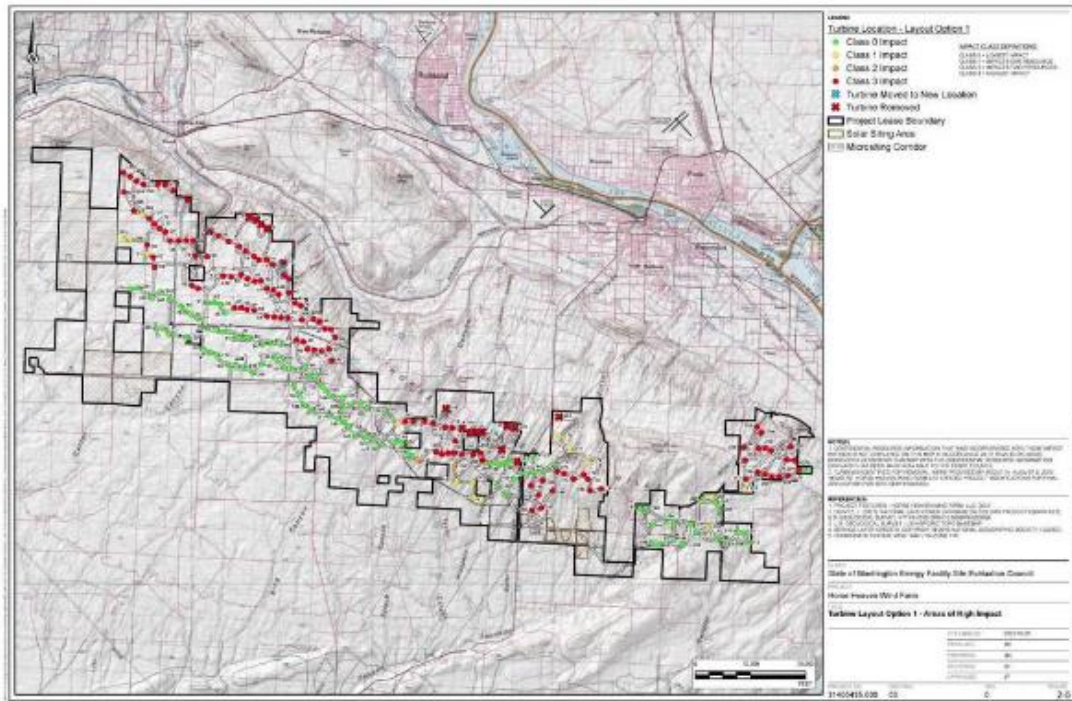


Figure 2-6: Turbine Layout Option 1 - Areas of High Impact

Horse Heaven Wind Farm

Final Environmental Impact Statement

A Washington state council is considering recommending that wind turbines shown by red dots not be allowed in the Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center. They are rated as having the highest negative impacts. *Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council*

But EFSEC is expected to consider next month eliminating the planned turbines that would have the highest negative impacts, including on cultural resources and the ferruginous hawk, an endangered species in Washington state with nests in the Horse Heaven Hills.

Impacts also could include visual and aerial firefighting impacts to nearby residents.

Changes discussed by the council include no or very limited exceptions to a ban within two miles of ferruginous hawk nests for not just wind turbines, but other infrastructure including solar arrays, battery storage, transmission lines and roads.

Testimony from the Yakama Nation on cultural resources was not made public.

But a map highlighting the turbines of highest impact shows them to be those most visible from the Tri-Cities.



Scout Clean Energy plans a 61,600-acre wind farm on Benton County farm land south of the Tri-Cities along the Horse Heaven Hills ridgeline south of Badger Road. Bob Brawdy *Tri-City Herald* file

At a council meeting Dec. 20, the council also discussed the possibility of eliminating all turbines proposed east of Straub Canyon, which is south of Richland, to protect tribal cultural resources. That would eliminate wind turbines on the eastern half of the project.

The council also wants more information about aerial firefighting needs and restrictions on firefighting airplanes and helicopters near turbines by its next meeting.

[Benton City Mayor Linda Lehman](#) wrote in an op-ed published in the *Tri-City Herald*, arguing that turbines on the ridgeline of Horse Heaven Hills would threaten the safety of residents in Benton City, Kiona and Badger Canyon.

She called for the proposed turbines to be moved south of the ridge so that firefighting aircraft can safely operate to protect residents.

EFSEC staff have been instructed to prepare a revised draft Application for Site Certification for the council to consider at its January meeting. Meetings are typically the third Wednesday of each month.