



Washington State Legislature

June 8, 2023

Energy Facility Siting Evaluation Council,

We are writing to express our concerns about the proposed Horse Heaven Hills Wind/Solar project and adjudication.

This unprecedented project is the largest proposed wind farm in the state of Washington to date. Up to 244, 499-foot-high wind turbines are planned to occupy an area over 25 miles across and approximately 8 miles wide, straddling ridgelines of the Horse Heaven Hills directly in sight of the cities of Benton City, West Richland, Richland, Kennewick, Pasco and Finley.

We have serious concerns about the disproportionate impacts the project will have on Southeastern Washington, as there are over 100,000 people who live within six miles of the project. This is more visible and orders of magnitude larger than any other wind project in the state.

Significant concerns about the project and the adjudication process have been raised by Benton County, the Yakama Nation, and by Tri-Cities CARES, a local non-profit organization that is doing a noteworthy job representing the diverse interests of the public.

Chair Drew has denied requests from the parties to conduct the hearings in the Tri-Cities and in spite of grave concerns about fairness and prejudice, has directed that the venue for the adjudication be held virtually. We do not believe this decision to be appropriate given the nature and magnitude of the impacts this project will have on the citizens of the region.

EFSEC has accelerated the adjudication process without letting the public know how they are going to address the 2,400 public comments that were sent in by the public, many of which pointed to substantial errors, omissions and misrepresentation made in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

To date EFSEC has not yet released a target date for the publication of a final EIS nor explained how they propose to mitigate the significant impacts posed by the proposed project.

We are also troubled that WDFW biologists are being prevented from transparently sharing their scientific knowledge regarding the ferruginous hawk and other endangered species. EFSEC is apparently placing limitations on the testimony of public employees who work for a public agency on a public matter all paid with public money. Ferruginous hawks do not belong to the project applicant and for EFSEC to be anything less than transparent and objective regarding the freedom of these employees to testify and share their knowledge is not acceptable.

Energy facilities of this magnitude are normally sited in rural areas. The Tri-Cities is the second most populous urban area in eastern Washington with a population of approximately 300K. Arbitrarily siting the Horse Heaven Hills project above the urban area of the Tri-Cities sets a concerning precedent.

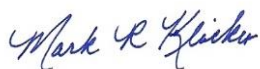
Given the magnitude of the project and the number of people impacted, EFSEC must take great care to fulfill its duties and obligations in a thorough, intentional, and impartial manner. We are not confident that this is being considered.

This process illustrates everything that is wrong when giving legislative authority to EFSEC to override local land use decision-making, and to adjudicate issues prior to the finalization of an environmental impact statement (EIS).

The Horse Heaven Hills project is too big, with negative impacts on the urban community of the Tri-Cities to disregard local concerns.

For this reason, we request that EFSEC exercise extreme care and prudence to openly assure that the project can be quantitatively shown to minimize environment impacts, produce substantial, tangible benefits to those communities, and satisfy the renewable energy needs of the State of Washington in a rational and reliable manner.

Regards,



Representative Mark. R. Klicker
16th Legislative District



Representative Stephanie Barnard
8th Legislative District



Representative Mary Dye
9th Legislative District



Representative Bruce Chandler
15th Legislative District



Representative Joe Schmick
9th Legislative District



Representative April Connors
8th Legislative District



Representative Skyler Rude
16th Legislative District



Senator Matt Boehnke
8th Legislative District