

EDITORIALS

Time for Tri-Citians opposed to Horse Heaven wind farm to rally. Here's what's needed / Opinion

BY THE TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

MAY 17, 2023 11:43 AM



Scout Clean Energy plans a wind farm on Benton County farm land south of the Tri-Cities along the Horse Heaven Hills ridgeline south of Badger Road.

Outrage over the proposed Horse Heaven Hills wind farm was fierce two years ago when Tri-Citians had their first shot at voicing their concerns during a [Benton County Commission hearing](#).

Now the process is at the state level and all that [community frustration](#) has been put on the shoulders of four citizens who are doing everything they can to represent Tri-City interests.

But it's getting to the point where the fight is getting expensive and Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S is scrambling to raise money for the legal battle ahead.

For those who adamantly oppose the wind farm, now is the time to open your wallets and make a donation to the cause.

It's not fair for such a small group to carry this load alone. They are committed to putting in the time, but they need financial backing from the community.

Those leading the wind farm challenge are Paul Krupin, Dave Sharp, Pam Minelli, and Karen Brun — directors for Tri-City C.A.R.E.S. They organized the 501(c)(3) nonprofit to represent the people in our community with a united voice.

Krupin told the Herald they are cautious about estimating the total amount they will need to continue the legal challenge because there's no way to know when it will end.

But for now, they need at least \$100,000 for attorney fees and expert witnesses to testify before a judge. Krupin said the only way to have influence on the outcome from now on is in the adjudication.

“If we don't succeed in the adjudication and legal battles, then we are going to be significantly harmed,” said Krupin, a retired attorney and retired environmental specialist.

The attorney for Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S, J. Richard Aramburu, wrote in a letter that the Horse Heaven application is the biggest renewable project ever proposed in Washington state, and cumulatively the wind turbines stretch for 25 miles — the distance from downtown Seattle to Tacoma.

We'd like Gov. Jay Inslee to imagine what that would look like if it were possible to put wind turbines that far along Interstate 5.

He is the one who will have the final say on the matter. But first, the approval process has to go through the state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC).

[Scout Clean Energy](#), the company behind the Horse Heaven project, made an end-run around Benton County and took its application straight to EFSEC — the council with power to override local decision makers.

Krupin said the [process has been a mess](#) and there are several legal issues that may need to be resolved by the Washington Supreme Court before a recommendation can be presented to Inslee.

EFSEC refused to hold public hearings in the Tri-Cities, and Krupin told the Herald that EFSEC's visit to the Tri-Cities last November was a "dismal failure." The weather was rainy and cold and the trip was led by Scout Clean Energy.

Apparently, Tri-Citians in attendance could only listen. C.A.R.E.S Vice President Dave Sharp said he attended the tour and when he tried to correct misinformation, he was shut down and told he couldn't address the state council.

He also said that when he got the tour map, he realized the council wasn't going to the Horse Heaven Hills at all and the group also failed to see the most impacted population zones on Badger Canyon Road.

From this account alone, it certainly appears that the deck is stacked against the public.

Benton County and the Yakama Nation are also fighting the wind farm proposal, and both are working with Tri-City C.A.R.E.S. But Krupin noted that all three entities have separate goals.

Tri-Cities C.A.R.E.S is the party fighting specifically for citizens' interests, he said. That includes an attempt to protect our cultural resources, wildlife, the natural skylines, tourism, real estate, agriculture and other economic concerns.

In addition, the group has focused much of its attention on protecting the [ferruginous hawk](#) population. These birds breed and rear their young in the Horse Heaven Hills, but the loss of shrub-steppe habitat has greatly reduced their numbers and they are now listed as an endangered species with the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

Adding a wind farm in their breeding grounds will surely have a negative impact.

Krupin said the time for public comment is over and now the challenge will be decided through legal avenues. He said Tri-City C.A.R.E.S is eager to speak to service groups and other organizations and fill citizens in on what's going on.

And if anyone wants to make a contribution, they can go to the Tri-City C.A.R.E.S website at tricityscares.org. The community should not take the efforts of four citizens for granted — it's time to help them out financially.

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