



## OPINION AND COMMENTARY

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EDITORIALS

## *Tri-Citians are being asked to give up too much for Horse Heaven Hills wind farm / Opinion*

BY THE TRI-CITY HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

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Turbines at the Nine Canyon Wind Farm near Lower Blair Road south of Kennewick spin. A larger wind farm is proposed to be added along the Horse Heaven Hills. BOB BRAWDY *Tri-City Herald* file



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When it comes to the [proposed Horse Heaven Hills wind turbine project](#), the Tri-Cities is being asked to sacrifice too much.

Sure, it will provide good-paying construction jobs for a while, and the farmers leasing their land for the project [stand to benefit a great deal](#).

But for the community as a whole, plans to mar the Mid-Columbia landscape is a major problem.

The scope is massive, which makes it difficult to embrace.

The project will cover 110 square miles from Finley to Benton City, and it's so big it will destroy our scenic vistas, which in turn will jeopardize tourism and economic growth.

Surely [there could be somewhere else in Eastern Washington](#) where these man-made structures, some the size of the Seattle Space Needle, could be placed — somewhere that won't affect thousands of people.

Recently, [three Tri-City residents took it upon themselves](#) to pore over the project's draft environmental study and found that the wind turbines would be so close to the community that they would be visible from Kennewick, Richland and Pasco.

They also discovered that more than 100 turbines will be visible from downtown Richland, and that the main Interstate 82 entrance to Kennewick would be flanked by the towering structures.

What kind of greeting is that for visitors?

And while newly elected state Rep. April Connors, R-Kennewick, [has proposed legislation](#) requiring the blinking red lights on top of the turbines activate only when a low-flying aircraft is near, there's no way to be certain her bill will become law.

The Tri-Citians who dissected the Horse Heaven Clean Energy Center plans are Paul Krupin, a scientist and attorney who worked on environmental issues for the federal government for three decades; Dave Sharp, a retired manager of Wyoming wind farms, and Pam Minelli, a homeowner.

The three found that the draft study did not properly analyze the project's impact on the people who would have to live near it.

Sharp told the Herald that "you just don't develop them in a metropolitan area. They should be in a rural area."

Krupin said that at the top of Webber Canyon, the turbines will stretch from one horizon to the other.

That's heartbreaking.

Last year, we published [a guest column from Mike Paoli](#), the past Chief Communications Officer for Energy Northwest.

He noted that the wind farm will take far more than it gives by slicing through the view shed of wine country and skirting along miles of urban growth boundaries specifically designed to protect natural and agricultural lands.

In addition, Paoli said our local utilities already meet state carbon reduction mandates because we are flush with hydro and nuclear power. So the power produced from the Horse Heaven energy project will go to utility companies that need to bolster their clean energy portfolios — most likely in Western Washington or possibly out of our state.

[Jim Conca, a Tri-Cities scientist who has focused his career on energy issues](#), also wrote a column for the Herald last year saying that there is little fossil fuel production in Washington state, which relies mostly on hydro, nuclear, and wind.

He wrote that the wind farm will have no effect on carbon emissions because it displaces hydro — another renewable energy source. But “it will make Olympia feel good” and “it definitely will make someone out of state a lot of money.”

Paoli suggested that Tri-Citians tell state leaders we will not support a venture in our backyard designed to solve a problem in their backyard and that we do not accept the notion that “sending energy value to our west-side neighbors is worth forfeiting the economic and environmental health of our own community.”

You can still submit comments on this draft study through Feb. 1.

The draft study is posted at [efsec.wa.gov](http://efsec.wa.gov) under the Horse Heaven Wind Project section. It also is available at libraries in Benton County. Comments may be submitted online at [comments.efsec.wa.gov](http://comments.efsec.wa.gov) or mailed to Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council, 621 Woodland Square Loop SE, Lacey, WA 98504-3172.

We hope this plan isn't a done deal in the eyes of state officials and Gov. Jay Inslee. Be sure to let your voice be heard.