Meeting called to order at 7:00 by John Zerba

Meeting Minutes  Minutes were approved as submitted.

Lincoln Mountain Wind Farm Update
Mark Haugen and Dave Richards from Gaelectric Northwest came to the meeting to provide an update on the feasibility work their company is completing. In addition they came to describe the area they are looking at for their proposed project, its basic components and the typical review and approval process for a project of its size. Gaelectric requested the opportunity to present at the council meeting when they heard there were local concerns about the effects the wind farm project might have on the Walla Walla Basin Watershed.

Mark explained that locations are chosen through a process of evaluating information from the National Renewable Energy Lab. Maps that document average wind speeds are reviewed. Once an area has been designated as meeting criteria, landowners are contacted to determine if there is any interest in participating in the project. Once interested landowners are found, a feasibility study is done to determine wind information for specific sites. These numbers are what are used throughout the project and for financial institutions.

Stateline was one of the first locations on which Gaelectric developed a wind farm. They are now working on the feasibility of a site located on Lincoln and Basket Mountains. In order for this project to take place, there will need to be some improvements. The turbines will require lay down areas and improved roads with a 35 ft width for transport in. Once the project construction is complete, roads will be reduced to a 20 ft width. Additionally, there will need to be roads constructed to the mountain ridges and places for equipment storage developed. After the facility is functioning, a small maintenance facility will be built about a mile to the west.

Mark then moved to the permitting process. Typically Gaelectric has a firm handle the permitting process. The firms are well aware of all the requirements that must be fulfilled for the projects. The first step is to file a Notice of Intent with the state. Once enough information is gathered, they provide preliminary descriptions of the project, a list of issues and how they propose to address them, the areas of wildlife and wetlands, historical attributes, a timeframe of when to expect to have studies completed and a proposed time of when they plan to actually file for the site certification which is mandated by State EFSAC. Gaelectric has already had discussions with Fish and Wildlife and property owners regarding wetlands, cultural issues, etc. They intend to use as much local information as possible in order to gain a good knowledge of what they need to look for in these areas. They are still in the process of gathering information for the Lincoln Mountain location. Once they are past the gathering information phase, they submit an application for a site certificate. There is no federal money or land involved so an EIS is not required but the site certificate is very similar.

Gaelectric is aware there are local concerns regarding the impact this project may have on the water quality and quantity in the Walla Walla River. It is their mission to keep impacts to the environment to a minimum, if not complete elimination of all negative impact. The goal is to reduce sediment from the ridgelines with
erosion control measures. Proposed silt fences, ditch dams, etc. will implement erosion control where currently there is none. The Oregon Department of Environmental Quality ensures proper management of sites. For this project, the predominant suggestion is silt fencing along roads, ditches and ditch lines. They don’t retain water but remove the silt from the water as it enters the river. Gaelectric feels this will be adequate to maintain or even improve water quality. They will meet state guidelines pre, post and during monitoring.

The final plan for the Lincton Mountain project will be completed in late 2010. They are still in the process of doing wind assessments which will be on-going throughout. Ron Brown commented that US Fish and Wildlife should be involved. He noted that while the state is apparently involved, the federal government should be as well. Marks stated all comments would be forward to Gaelectric’s appropriate departments.

Mark maintained that Gaelectric follows whatever processes the state requires, but he does not know the specifics of what the state requires. They contract with a firm that handles much of the application process. The financial institutions require a great deal of information before they will provide funding. The results of the information gathering have been positive so far. The will continue to work with state agencies to develop a plan for reasonable sites and implement the plan.

Q: Who would be economically responsible in the event of an environmental issue?
A: Mark stated Gaelectric would bear the economical consequences an environmental issue occurred. He also stated they were not opposed to federal involvement—it just isn’t a requirement.

Q: How many jobs would this project bring to the area?
A: A possible 20 people for 100 windmills.

Q: How many windmills will be involved in this site?
A: The project has 200 megawatts limit. Mark did not know the exact number of turbines that will be used because it will depend on the size of turbine used.

Q: What is the length of the contract with the landowner?
A: Cannot divulge this information because it is a private contract with a landowner. The length of a project can go on for several decades but also may not. The average usable life of a turbine is approximately 20 years but it can then be rebuilt or updated with newer technology. It costs approximately $100,000 to $200,000 to take down the turbines. Gaelectric would pay for these costs if they decided to discontinue the project.

Q: What types of soils are best for the project and what is the current land use at the proposed site?
A: The majority of the land use will not change – wheat, CRP. It may not be as efficient as it is now. The soil on top of the ridge is shallow soil underlined with fractured basalt. If the ground does not appear to be conducive to anchoring the towers, materials could come from other area of the site or from someplace else.

Q: With fractured basalt how far do you have to drill?
A: We are not geotechnical engineers but in some cases not very deep. If it was determined the ground was too fractured for anchors, we would change the design for each individual turbine.

Q: What is the company’s plan once they have built these projects? Will they be around after the project is built or will they be gone?
A: Gaelectric’s intent is to be long-term. The first phase lasts 20-30 years and we have just opened a new office in Pilot Rock.

Q: What is the big incentive for wind energy over dams? Everything is driven by economics. Why grid here for energy instead of somewhere else?
A: Other places don’t have nearly the wind. It’s a matter of going through all the numbers. Hydro is one of the least expensive forms of energy. There is a lot of pressure on dams right now because of the issues with
Fish. We can’t continue to dam the rivers. There is a tremendous amount of pressure from special interest groups. The wind resource dictates where to place the turbines.

Q: Kat commented that when the hydro dams were built, the Native Americans were told the salmon would be protected they weren’t. Now you say this project won’t hurt our watershed but are we going to have the same problem?
A: There is a learning curve but we have learned a lot from when these projects first started. We have identified why some of the problems happen. Recently there was a report from ODFW about bat fatalities and we have found answers. We now stall turbines during high bat activity. It is a learning process but we are constantly working towards resolutions – constant self monitoring.

Q: What happens post monitoring by the company?
A: We have a consulting firm that works with state fish and wildlife. We follow what the state and Energy Facility Siting Council say.

Q: This project doesn’t do a lot for us. We suffer the impact and your company gets the money.
A: A portion of the money goes into county funding and there are some direct economic impacts for people in the county.

Q: What are the regulations for the distance between turbines and homes?
A: It is currently proposed at 1200 feet but is not finalized. We are in the preliminary discussion with the county.

Q: There are elk herds on that mountain. What will be done to protect and sustain those herds?
A: We haven’t definitively developed a plan. We have talked to ODFW and are looking at these issues. We are only here for water quality and water quantity issues. Discussions are still on-going. We are not here to answer all types of questions.

Q: When the plan is final, will you bring it back and agree to consider input from this body?
A: Yes.

Several people commented that if Gaelectric could cause discharge into the Walla Walla River they should have to go through the same HCP processes as irrigators.

Kat stated that the tribes have not taken a position. Her concern is that Gaelectric’s statements are similar to BPA’s statements made years ago. Kat does not want to see the same outcome as with BPA. She is afraid that after numerous years Gaelectric will pick up and go. She feels it is important for them to develop collaborative relationships with all the agencies and that everyone is looking at the information.

Mark stated they have to go through a very strict financial microscope, under a lot of scrutiny from many different types of agencies. The bankers won’t be happy unless all the agencies are happy and they will not lend if there are problems with the agencies. ODFW could say no and they will unless they feel it won’t impact the Walla Walla River. Before any construction is done they will install erosion control facilities which are inspected.

Anyone with comments should write them down and forward to Gaelectric through Brian.

**Feasibility Study**
Brian prepared Letters of Support to be sent to the Tribes and Corps regarding the Feasibility Study. It was decided that the letters would go out as submitted.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:23.