

Idaho Power gains access for surveys, withdraws lawsuits

One Union County case remains open

By JAYSON JACOBY
Baker City Herald

BAKER CITY — Boise, Idaho-based Idaho Power has withdrawn all of the 10 lawsuits it filed this winter against Baker County landowners seeking access to their property to do surveys related to the proposed Boardman-to-Hemingway transmission line project.

Attorneys for the company filed the civil petitions between mid-December 2021 and early February 2022.

Idaho Power was asking a judge to order the landowners to allow access to their properties for a variety of surveys, including looking for certain wildlife and plant species.

The company sought to dismiss the lawsuits because “we were able to obtain rights-of-entry out of court from all of the Baker County landowners

we requested it from.” Sven Berg, an Idaho Power spokesperson, said.

That was also the case with most of Idaho Power’s lawsuits filed in other counties in Eastern Oregon, including Union, Umatilla and Morrow, Berg said.

In five cases, however, there were court hearings, he said. Four of those were in Union County, and one in Morrow County.

In two cases, a judge granted Idaho Power a default judgment granting the company access for surveys.

Three others went to trial, Berg said. In two cases the court granted Idaho Power access for surveys.

One case, in Union County, remains open. The landowner in that case is 516 Ranch Partnership.

Idaho Power has been working since 2007 on the Boardman-to-Hemingway project, a 293-mile, 500-kilovolt line that would run from near Boardman to Hemingway,



Baker City Herald, File

The proposed Boardman-to-Hemingway power line would follow the route of an existing line that crosses Highway 86 between Baker City and the Oregon Trail Interpretive Center.

near Murphy in Owyhee County, Idaho.

Although sections of the proposed route run through public property — Idaho Power has received permission from the federal government to do so — the line, as proposed,

would also cross several dozen parcels of private land in multiple counties, including Baker, Union, Wallowa and Morrow in Oregon.

Idaho Power would have to pay private landowners for an easement to build

the power line across their property. This would be a one-time payment, not an annual lease, according to www.boardmantohemingway.org.

Berg said the line would affect about 30 private landowners in Baker County,

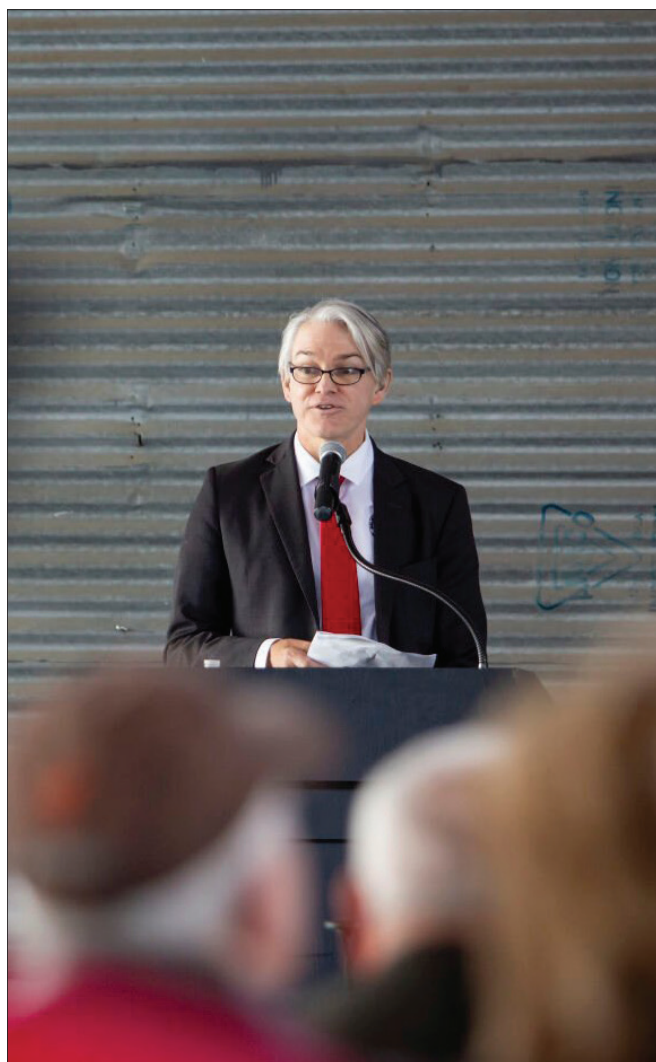
who combined own about 60 separate parcels.

Berg said Idaho Power does not pay for access to private property to do pre-construction surveys.

In each petition filed in court, Idaho Power’s attorneys, Timothy Helfrich and Zach Olson, of the Yturri Rose firm in Ontario, state that either the company or its contractor, Cornerstone Energy Inc. 21, acting on the company’s behalf, had “contacted the Respondent several times to request access to survey, test, and sample the Property. Respondent has not granted Idaho Power access to the Property.”

“Because construction on the B2H project is scheduled to start as early as 2023, Idaho Power must begin surveying, testing, and sampling the Property in 2022,” the petitions state.

Berg said Idaho Power typically sends three letters to each property owner before filing petitions in court.



East Oregonian, File

Delmar Aeospace Corp. COO Stanley Springer speaks May 19, 2021, during an event announcing Blue Mountain Community College’s UAS program in a hangar at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Pendleton. Darryl Abling, manager of the Pendleton drone test range, reports the range had about 7,000 operations in 2021 and expects to have 15,000 to 20,000 in 2022.

Pendleton UAS Range is busier than ever

By JOHN TILLMAN
East Oregonian

PENDLETON — The manager of the Pendleton UAS Range, Darryl Abling, reported the site is busier than ever.

Last year, the range had around 7,000 operations. This year, Abling said he expects 15,000 to 20,000.

“Despite the weather, as of the end of April, we’ve had 1,292 operations in 2022,” he said. “When we finally get spring and into summer, we’ll fly even more often.”

The test range has about 15 unmanned aerial system clients with semi-permanent leases and operating on a daily or weekly basis, according to Abling.

“We have several new clients whom I can’t talk about,” he said. “We get new people all the time, and the 15 here are expanding their operations.”

Nondisclosure agreements bind Abling and the rest of the city from publicly disclosing specifics about the clients operating at the range.

The Pendleton UAS

Range was awarded in 2013, but started off slowly. Air Force veteran Abling came to Pendleton in 2016, after 29 years with Northrop Grumman Corp., working on the B-2 stealth bomber in Southern California.

“I don’t want to go back,” he said. “Even to visit.”

The range in 2016 had only 54 operations, but its use started to take off after Air Bus’ and the Navmar Applied Sciences Corporation’s programs arrived the following year.

Air Bus’ Vahana project was an all-electric, tilt-wing vehicle demonstrator. The only flyable Vahana in existence is in boxes at the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, Pendleton. It spent two years in a San Francisco warehouse before returning to Pendleton. NASC’s ArcticShark developed a cold weather drone.

Some range clients currently flying openly include Verizon Robotics, Cubic Corporation’s ISR Systems of San Diego, and two Columbia Gorge companies, Insitu, of Bingen, Washington, and Hood River’s Hood Tech Mechanical.

Started in a small garage in 1994, Insitu is now a subsidiary of Boeing. It makes the widely used military ScanEagle drone and the Navy and Marine Corps’ larger RQ-21 Blackjack. Its neighbor, Hood Tech, produces the Flying Air Recovery System, which provides fixed-wing drones with vertical takeoff and landing capability.

“(Range staff) have been terrific,” Hood Tech engineer Cory Roeseler said. “They do a nice job.”

Hood Tech has flown 700 times during the years on the range with a perfect safety record. Hood Tech is working on FLARES 3.0 at Pendleton, a system capable of handling larger and heavier drones.

“It’s a challenge to integrate unmanned and manned flights in the same air space,” Roeseler said. “They do it as well as anyone. Better in fact. We’ve been all over, from the Army’s Yuma Proving Ground to Florida and everywhere in between. Pendleton does it the best.”

Pendleton’s range belongs to the Pan-Pacific

UAS Test Range Complex, one of seven official FAA test sites in the country. Managed by the University of Alaska Fairbanks, the PPUTRC spans seven climate zones, allowing UAS manufacturers and potential users to test their equipment in the Arctic, the tropics and in arid environments. It encompasses ranges in Hawaii, California, Oregon, Kansas and Mississippi. Besides Pendleton, UAS test ranges in Oregon are at Warm Springs and Tillamook.

The other six Federal Aviation Administration-approved ranges are in New York, Virginia, North Dakota, Texas, New Mexico and Nevada.

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