

The Biglow Canyon Wind Farm is being built by PGE. It is expected to produce enough electricity to power about 100,000 homes.

Union-Trained Workers Help Build Oregon's Renewable Energy Future

BY SHELLEY PARKER
Special Correspondent

BOARDMAN, Ore. — High on the hills east of the Cascade Range a remarkable transformation is occurring. As the cows roam and crops grow, the wind blows — and it blows. It's the unique location, topography, and climate that makes the majestic rolling hills of the Columbia River Gorge an ideal setting for wind farming.

When it comes to renewable energy, the Pacific Northwest continues to lead the nation. From solar to wind and beyond, the region has made significant advancements in a relatively short period of time.

Members of Operating Engineers Local 701 are proud to be a part of it.

"Renewable energy work in the region has grown exponentially in the last few years," said Nelda Wilson, assistant business manager for Local 701. "Keeping our journeymen working is always a priority, and work in this sector is especially welcome. Contributing to renewable energy is rewarding."

Local 701 currently has 55 journeymen at eight different wind farm sites: Hay Canyon and Biglow Canyon near

Wasco; Pebble Springs, Rattlesnake, and Wheatland near Arlington; and Three Mile Canyon and Willow Creek west of Boardman.

The work ranges from development of new roads to impressive crane operations needed to erect the 282 foot tall towers that have a turbine at the top with 120 foot turbine blades to catch the wind.

Onlookers gain respect for seasoned equipment operators as they watch the precision needed to gracefully erect windmill components as large as 80 tons in the sometimes-unpredictable windy conditions.

Safety is always top of mind and especially critical on wind farm project sites where the heaviest and most powerful equipment, including 600-ton cranes, are used.

The Operating Engineers' comprehensive five-year apprenticeship program involves both textbook and hands-on training, and is turning out many journeymen and women who look forward to a chance to work on new renewable energy construction.

Dan Clifton, a 27-year journeyman, has worked on a variety of wind projects in both Oregon and California. "I've worked on hundreds of projects

over the years," Clifton said. "Having a hand in these wind farm developments is exciting. I hear a lot of talk about what's not getting done with alternative energy, but I'm out here getting it done."

From beginning to end, each windmill requires approximately 300 man-hours to install. This includes the transportation infrastructure necessary to access a new site. The life expectancy of each windmill is 20 years, and each will power up to 100 homes.

Like solar, wind technology continuously evolves, allowing for better efficiencies and output.

You don't have to be a construction tradesman or engineer to appreciate the significance of these technological advancements. Looking across miles of picturesque golden plains beneath a flawless blue sky, hundreds of strategically positioned windmills somehow complement the landscape. They create a mesmerizing feeling of peace that slowly turns into a warming sense of hope. It's a nice realization to see the results of innovation and hard work by people who are committed to advancing our energy independence through renewable sources.

Local Motion

September 2008

Union certifications and decertifications in Oregon and Southwest Washington, as reported by the National Labor Relations Board and the Oregon Employment Relations Board

Recognition elections

Name of employer	Date	Name of union	Location	Results:		
				Union Yes	Union No	
Harry's Fresh Foods	8/21	Bakers Local 364	Portland	57	79	
Bales Thriftway	9/8	UFCW Local 555	Aloha	5	2	
Kaiser Foundation Health Plan	9/17	SEIU Local 49	Portland	9	1	
City of Silverton Public Works Department	9/22	Laborers 483 vs. SPW Assn.	Portland	0	5	
General Electric (decertification)	9/24	CWA Local 7990	Portland	0	5	

Recognition by card check

Name of employer	Date	Name of union	Location	Number of employees
Ridgeline Montessori Public Charter School	9/3	American Federation of Teachers-Oregon	Eugene	30

Requests for recognition election

Name of employer	Date	Name of union	Location	Number of employees
Forgue & Phillips Painting		Painters & Allied Trades District Council 5	Salem	6
Oregon Child Development Coalition		Laborers Local 320	Gresham	50

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