

ICE: Some Hermiston residents are on high alert

Continued from Page A1

ment action. Last Friday — after the arrests near Hermiston — President Donald Trump reported that ICE was planning raids across the country to arrest thousands of undocumented immigrants, starting July 14.

“They’re going to take people out, and they’re going to bring them back to their countries, or they’re going to take criminals out — put them in prison or put them in prison in the countries they came from,” Trump told

reporters. Since then, CNN reported people in major cities across America have been unable to confirm many reports of ICE activity.

Meanwhile, some local residents are still on high alert following the arrests and multiple ICE sightings in the Hermiston area.

A sergeant from the Hermiston Police Department who spoke with an ICE officer July 9 was led to believe that there was a small operation occurring in the Eastern Washington and Oregon area, HPD Chief Jason Edmiston stated.

Edmiston stated it was later determined the officer had a large caseload and did not “have time to address immigration violations.”

“We cannot enforce immigration law and will not. Our involvement will only be to assist an officer that is in need of immediate help due to distress. This is something we would do for [any] entity or agency,” Edmiston stated.

Zaira Sanchez, the external communications director with the organization Raices — which aims to “unite and educate Latinx people” of Umatilla County — said the

organization had received recent reports of ICE sightings in the area.

She said early last week that ICE officers had been spotted questioning people in a van outside of Lorena’s on 11th Street in Hermiston.

“That invoked a lot of fear,” Sanchez said. “People were quick to check in on family members in vans that day.”

Sanchez said that the Portland Immigrant Rights Coalition hotline had received eight calls from the Hermiston area recently. The hotline takes reports of sightings

and interactions with ICE in Oregon, and has volunteers trained to verify those sightings and provide resource referrals.

She said Raices hopes to form a rapid response team for immigration rights, but that the organization currently lacks the capacity.

There were reports on social media of ICE sightings at Walmart last Friday as well.

Jesse Roa, who works with the Tri-Cities Immigrant Rights Coalition, said the sighting was reported by volunteers specialized in spot-

ting ICE officers.

He said there were also sightings in the Irrigon area.

Roa said that some people were using vacation time to avoid going out during the sightings, and others were leaving the area.

“(This) is tearing the community in half and adding a lot of fear. Not only for migrant families, but for people who are friends or relatives to families,” Roa said. “I think this community is really resilient. I’m pretty sure the community is going to come together to help each other.”

Turbines: More wind power means more transmission lines

Continued from Page A1

developers pushing to build turbines at new sites across the region are stirring a brew of new and age-old conflicts: bird and bat mortalities, push-back from rural communities that resist change and obstacles created by the limited power grid infrastructure.

Gone with the wind

For years, wind was dismissed as a fickle power source that could never meet a significant portion of the nation’s energy needs. New technologies and falling costs, however, are changing the industry.

According to the American Wind Energy Association, since 2009, the cost of wind energy has plunged 69%, making it the most affordable power source in much of the U.S. According to the U.S. Department of Energy, the installation cost for a commercial-scale wind turbine today is \$3 million to \$4 million. The industry, which for decades relied on tax incentives, is being weaned off subsidies, said Janine Benner, director of the Oregon Department of Energy.

Most U.S. wind turbines are manufactured in the U.S. Benner said Oregon has 8 manufacturers. Vestas, the world’s largest wind turbine manufacturer, is based in Portland.

New turbines, Benner said, are more efficient. Blades are longer. Rotors are better. And they are taller. One of the newest models stands at 650 feet — taller than Seattle’s Space Needle.

But bigger turbines mean more controversy.

The birds and the bats

Birds and bats have a fraught history with wind turbines, but new technologies are making it easier for winged creatures and wind power to co-exist.

The wind-bird controversy dates to the 1990s, when conservationists found thousands of bats and birds annually — including protected species, such as Golden Eagles — dying or being mutilated at California’s Altamont Pass wind farm.

Bat mortalities are often harder to quantify, said Todd Katzner, a research wildlife biologist with the U.S. Geological Survey. Because bats are tiny, their remains often vanish.

Industry advocates say mortalities from turbines are scant compared to millions of annual bird deaths caused by cats, power lines, vehicles or crashes into windows.

Katzner calls this an unfair comparison.

“It matters what species you kill,” said Katzner. “Songbirds probably crash into every house in North America. You never hear of a Golden Eagle killing itself by crashing into a window, but eagles do die from turbine blades. If you killed a million chipping sparrows, it would affect only 1% of the population. If you killed 100,000 Golden Eagles, you’d wipe out the entire U.S. Golden Eagle population twice.”

Researchers are pushing for laws and practices that kill fewer birds. One solution is choosing sites for wind farms away from migratory flyways. But siting is challenging.

In the West each year, more than a billion birds follow the Pacific Flyway — a migration path stretching from Arctic tundra to tropical rainforest.

However, said Gary George, the National Audubon Society’s renewable energy director, tracking birds in the western U.S. is difficult because migration pathways change based on rainfall and plants.

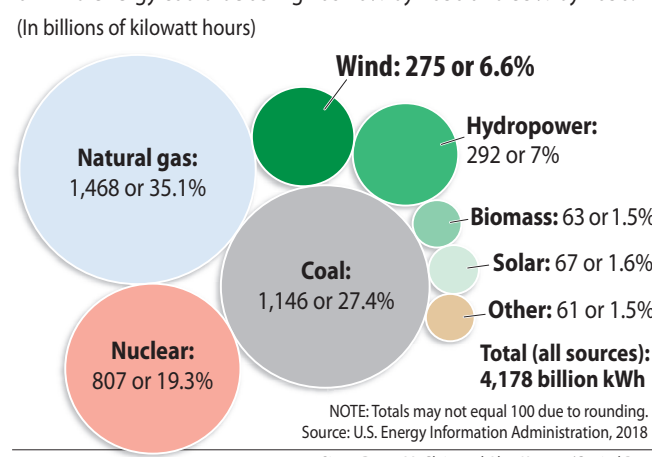
Face-recognition technology isn’t just for smart phones and Facebook. Scientists use similar artificial intelligence-based technologies, such as IdentiFlight, to train machines to recognize and track bird species.

Kevin Martin, director of environmental permitting at Terra-Gen Power, devised a GPS tracking system for protecting endangered California condors from death-by-turbine.

Energy companies pay for and operate these technologies because it’s expected and, sometimes, required. But developers have more to worry about than wildlife. They must also please

U.S. power capacity by source, 2018

The U.S. Department of Energy estimates the potential market share of wind energy could be as high as 20% by 2030 and 35% by 2050.



landowners.

Farming wind turbines

Threemile Canyon Farms — which encompasses 93,000 acres near Boardman — is near the Columbia Gorge.

The hills along the gorge buckle together like a great patchwork quilt of gold, brown and green draped over the earth. Trees grow bent from the gusts that tear across the plateau. A wind developer’s dream.

In 2007, Marty Myers, general manager of Threemile Canyon Farms, accepted an offer from then-developer John Deere Renewables to erect six wind turbines on the farm’s land.

For Myers, the turbines are a low-maintenance source of added income. The developer is responsible for maintenance and bird monitoring. Myers grows organic crops on that portion of the farm, leaving uncultivated a 1-acre patch under each turbine.

“It’s good business for a farmer,” he said. “No matter what happens in the ag market, it’s a source of stability.”

Myers said he wanted more turbines but was prevented because the farm lies too close to the Boardman Air Force Range, where turbines could interfere with low-flying planes.

“These turbines are fascinating things,” said Myers. “When night comes and the red lights of the turbines flash across the fields, it’s like somethin’ from outer space.”

He gestured west, toward the violet hills and Shepherd

Flats, the neighboring wind farm.

“I wish those ones were mine, too,” he said.

An interstate for electricity

Not everyone in Boardman, however, is happy with the energy industry.

More wind power means more transmission lines, which concerns rural people.

Todd Cornett is secretary for the state Energy Facility Siting Council, a branch of the Oregon Department of Energy responsible for ensuring that energy sites are chosen responsibly. According to him, even if turbines generate enough power, it’s useless if it can’t be moved to where it’s needed and when it’s needed. An expanded grid is essential — more high-tension power lines.

There’s the roadblock.

The U.S. uses 21st-century technology to produce energy, but still uses 20th-century infrastructure that can’t efficiently move energy from windy rural locations to urban markets. America’s power grid is like the nation’s roads before President Dwight Eisenhower’s Interstate Highway System. Cornett said that however much wind developers want to expand, they will be limited by access to transmission lines and substations.

One common criticism of renewable energy is that it’s intermittent — the wind doesn’t always blow. But on a big enough grid, that’s not a problem.

Many farmers, however, don’t want a bigger grid.

Battle over B2H

Boardman to Hemingway, or “B2H,” is a proposed 500-kilovolt transmission line that would string together 180-foot tall steel towers, 74% of which would be on private land. The power line would snake across 290 miles from Boardman in eastern Oregon to Hemingway in southwestern Idaho.

Many rural people aren’t happy about it.

In June, the Energy Facility Siting Council held a series of public hearings about the transmission line. On June 27, according to hearing transcripts, more than 200 people attended a 4-1/2-hour hearing in La Grande to express their concerns.

Residents said the power line will degrade natural areas with a 250-foot-wide clear cut, increase the likelihood of wildfires linked to transmission lines, cause health issues from electromagnetic fields, blot the land with an eyesore and damage the wagon tracks of the Oregon Trail.

“I would no longer be able to reside or fulfill my lifelong dreams and goal of living here,” said resident Greg Larkin.

Cornett of the EFSC said building another transmission line is like adding another straw to your drink. You can only suck a certain amount of liquid through one straw, but add another straw and you can pull up more. Add B2H, he said, and you can move more power quicker.

It remains to be seen whether rural communities will add another straw to their drink.

Tale of two counties

Not everyone is upset. Two Oregon counties, Gilliam and Sherman, have thrived because of wind power.

Welcome to Condon — a rural town in Gilliam County. Wheat and cattle, a couple dozen streets, population 675.

K’Lynn Lane, executive director of the Condon Chamber of Commerce,

grew up here. Over the years, she watched agriculture flounder, families sell off land, survivors hang on. The wind industry, Lane said, is what turned the town around.

Lane’s husband got a job working in management at the Montague Wind Power Facility, one of the largest wind sites under construction in the West.

“Condon was dying,” said Lane. “Wind power brought stable jobs with good benefits and gave people hope. Now look around — doesn’t this street look like something out of a Norman Rockwell painting?”

Sherman County. We end where we began.

When the turbines went up 17 years ago, said former County Judge Gary Thompson, things got crazy.

“It was like a gold rush,” he said. “All the big developers were knocking on doors. Everybody wanted a piece of the action.”

Jealousies cut deep, said Thompson. People whose land wasn’t good for turbines felt jilted. To curb resentments, Thompson struck a deal with developers.

While farmers negotiated with developers, the Sherman County government, led by Thompson, also negotiated on behalf of the community. The deal they struck was for developers to pay the county, which in turn would pay residents whose view of Mount Adams now included a panorama of turbines. They modeled the plan after Alaska, where residents receive a dividend generated by revenue from the state-owned Prudhoe Bay oil field.

Thompson kept checks under \$600 so county clerks wouldn’t have to file hundreds of tax forms. Since then, every Sherman County head of household who has owned property for more than a year has received an annual Christmas check. The county has invested the rest in infrastructure.

Thompson said the haves and the have-nots may be at the heart of the debate over wind turbines in rural communities. Those who benefit like them. Those who don’t benefit don’t like them.

Raiders: Thunderous sound of motorcycles replaced by roar of B-25

Continued from Page A1

community support that make this event shine.”

As the thunder of hundreds of motorcycle engines died off, the wind kicked up and filled dozens of American flags held by the crowd of bikers. Out of the whipping wind, the roar of a B-25 bomber swept overhead before landing and taxiing to the waiting group. The plane, a B-25J Mitchell nicknamed the “Heavenly Body,” is a part of the Erickson Aircraft Collection in Madras and was flown by Pilot Bill Shephard.

“I think everyone holds something different that brings a special meaning to this for them,” Shephard said. “For me it is the living history and the ability to continue the legacy for many of the veterans that flew a B-25.”

For Jim Benji of Yakima, Washington, the event brought him back to his



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

A Harley hearse bearing a box with the names of all deceased Oregon veterans roars onto the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport tarmac as part of the Ride with the Raiders event.

childhood.

“It brings back memories,” Benji said. “I grew up in Spokane and remember the noise of the planes overhead constantly. It just brings back that feeling.”

Following the event the B-25 took off carrying the names of thousands of Oregon’s fallen service members in an urn bound for Madras.

Since starting in 2015,

Bike Week has revolved around the convention center. The event includes coordinated rides, a motorcycle show, and a classic rock concert, which has featured bands like Three Dog Night



Staff photo by Kathy Aney

Capt. David Bower helps load a box containing the names of all 17,000 deceased Oregon veterans into a B-25 bomber for a short flight.

and Grand Funk Railroad. This year, the Marshall Tucker Band headlines the festivities with a concert Saturday night.

Pendleton Bike Week will continue through Sun-

day morning with daily events, group rides, and concerts for motorcycle enthusiasts of all ages. Organizers expect the event will draw 16,000 people across the week.