

Old wind turbine parts get new life

By **DICK MASON**
The Observer

LA GRANDE — Winds of change are turning heads and generating excitement at B&K Auto Salvage and Recycling.

The gusts are blowing in from wind farms in Arlington, 125 miles to the west, in the form of semi-trucks carrying parts from wind turbines that have been shut down due to declining condition after decades of use.

La Grande's B&K has been contracted by a wind farm-related organization to cut up wind turbine parts and send the metal to Portland for recycling.

Cutting up the wind turbine parts, which consist of gearboxes, main shafts and blade hubs, is anything but a breeze because of their size, according to Danny Huddleston, the recycling manager at B&K.

"The gearboxes weigh 45,000 pounds, and the main shafts and the blade hubs weigh 50,000 pounds," he said.

The metal wind turbine parts are being cut with acetylene torches by a crew working for B&K from Premier Scrap Processing.

The auto salvage business began receiving shipments from wind farms in the Arlington area on Thursday, Sept. 1. B&K has received 141 shipments from semi-trucks as of Sept. 20.

"We usually get 10 to 14 shipments a day," Huddleston said.

On some occasions as many as three semi-trucks have arrived at B&K almost at the same time, causing passing motorists to do double takes. Huddleston said he enjoys explaining to these people what is happening.

"This is definitely turning heads. People will say,



Danny Huddleston/Contributed Photo

Jake Hanson, right, owner of B&K Auto Salvage and Recycling, and Dave Vernam, owner and operator of Vemco Crane Service, examine an old wind turbine part from Arlington on Sept. 19, 2022, at B&K in La Grande.



Dick Mason/The Observer

Members of a crew from Premier Scrap Processing cut up old parts from wind turbines with acetylene torches at B&K Auto Salvage and Recycling on Sept. 19, 2022, in La Grande.

"What is happening?" It is nuts," he said. "It is pretty neat to get stop-ins like this."

Each truck carries only a gearbox, a main shaft or

a blade hub. Truckers cannot transport more than one item, Huddleston said, because of state and federal weight laws.

Once a truck arrives at

B&K, a crane with a hook lifts the turbine part out and lowers it to the ground.

B&K is never sent the aging blades of old wind turbines because they are

made of balsa wood, something the La Grande company does not handle, Huddleston said.

The gearboxes, main shafts and blade hubs B&K receives are all 20-25 years old. Huddleston said that when the wind turbines were installed many people believed they would last about 15 years. Their longevity was probably underrated, he said, because there were a lot of unknowns 25 years ago.

"It was not known how much the turbines would be turning," he said.

To create room for the wind turbine parts, the company removed about 100 automobiles from its storage yard. They were crushed and then sent out so the metal could be recycled.

B&K, owned by Jake Hanson, is working with Vemco Crane Service, United Hauling and United Metals to help wind turbine parts get recycled. It will be receiving shipments of wind turbine parts for at least another two weeks.

Huddleston said B&K's goal is to have all of the

metal for the wind turbine parts cut up before winter hits because it is harder to work then. One of the biggest challenges winter poses is the deep snow and mud it creates, which makes it easy to lose things that do not turn up again until the spring.

The wind turbine metal parts B&K is cutting up are being sent to Schnitzer Steel in Portland. Huddleston said the metal will eventually be melted down after leaving La Grande as part of the recycling process.

B&K, since Sept. 1, has sent two truckloads carrying 60,000-68,000 pounds of cut-up wind turbine metal to Schnitzer Steel.

Huddleston hopes that B&K can continue to help recycle metal from old wind turbines in the future. "It is work. This keeps everybody busy," he said.

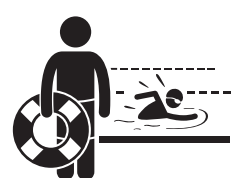
Huddleston added that working with the wind farm industry is proving to be a delightful and illuminating experience.

"It has been fascinating," he said.



John Day/Canyon City Pool Fact Sheet

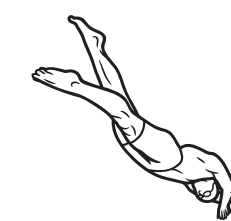
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Myth: A public pool for John Day can be built for \$2 million dollars.

FACT A public pool must adhere to code and other regulations. Fencing, office space, and restrooms are required.

The recently discussed \$2 million public pool projects are not comparable to the John Day/Canyon City project. One is a small component of a much larger \$70 million recreational complex. Another is a small non-competition pool that will be built on the footprint of the old pool and doesn't include buildings. A public pool must meet high standards for safety and accessibility. All necessary features need to be included for the facility to operate.



Myth: There wasn't enough opportunity to give public input and get information about the pool.

FACT There have been multiple ways to learn about and comment on the pool plans, beginning in the 1990s.

Some examples of information sharing and community involvement in the plan are: the 1997 John Day Swim Center and Chinese Cultural Center Report; the 2009 Kam Wah Chung Master Plan; steering and stakeholder committees formed in 2017; a 2021 community survey; Parks and Rec and city of John Day open houses in April 2022; and ongoing city council and parks and rec public meetings.



Myth: There was no need to tear down Gleason pool and the plan was pushed through too quickly.

FACT Repairing Gleason Pool was considered as an alternative to building a new pool.

A 1997 report recommended building the new pool at the 7th street location rather than the Gleason location. It also recognized the need to expand the Kam Wah Chung site. A conditions assessment in 2020 determined that the cost of repairs and upgrades would be very high. Experts said that renovating the pool would only extend its lifespan for about 10 years. A new pool will serve the community for many decades.



Myth: The proposed pool design is extravagant.

FACT The proposed pool is a modest design--essentially a modernized version of Gleason.

The design is ADA-accessible, sized to accommodate swim meets, and includes adequate office space. It will meet Oregon Health Authority requirements for public pools. Consolidating JDCCPR offices into one building will limit operational and utility costs. Including a multi-purpose room adds potential revenue and community space. The pool is designed so that it can be enclosed in the future, if the tax base can support that improvement.

For more information visit www.swimcenter.vote or find us on Facebook @Friends-of-JDCC-Parks-and-Rec