

HEPPNER

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Heppner wind project on hold for lack of renewable energy customers

By David Sykes

The developer of a proposed 280-turbine wind farm on 40,000 acres of private land seven miles east of Heppner apparently still has not been able to find buyers for the 500 megawatts of renewable energy the wind farm would produce.

Invenergy LLC, based in Chicago, asked for and was recently granted a one-year extension on its permit to build the

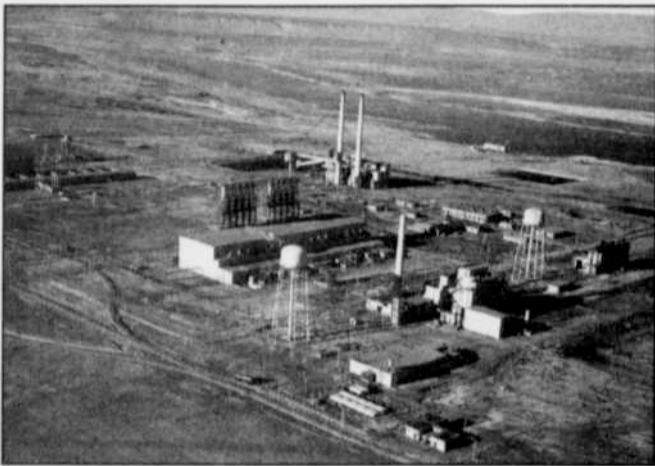
wind farm; however, a company spokesperson Tuesday did not say if or when the project would get underway, but did say that "the ultimate project size and development timetable are contingent upon market demand."

However, in a Jan. 9 letter from energy analyst Sue Oliver of the Hermiston State Dept. of Energy office, Oliver told the Siting Council that Invenergy was still looking for someone

to buy the electricity, and had not yet been able to secure a power purchase agreement for the Heppner project because of electrical utilities' preference to "self-build," regional transmission constraints, and California's preference for its renewable energy to be obtained from resources within California.

Another nearby, big, completed wind farm, -See WIND FARM ON HOLD/PAGE SEVEN

County historical society invites locals for Hanford tour



In this photo from World War II, B Reactor can be seen between the water towers on the right side of the photo, along with other facilities that supported reactor operations. The reactor began operating in September 1944; it was shut down from 1946-1948, and then went back into service until 1968. -Photo courtesy of the U.S. Dept. of Energy

Interested persons are invited to sign up for an April tour of the Hanford-Site B Reactor, scheduled by the Morrow County Historical Society.

An internet visit to hanford.gov offers the following and additional information about the historic phenomenon:

"One of the most historic buildings at Hanford is the B Reactor, code named 105-B during World War II. The B Reactor was the world's first, full-scale nuclear

reactor and produced the plutonium used in the 'Fat Man' bomb dropped over Nagasaki, Japan, in August of 1945. Five days after that bomb was deployed, World War II ended.

"B Reactor is an engineering marvel that was built in only thirteen months (1943-1944). As the world's first nuclear reactor, drawings and blueprints were being developed at the same time the reactor was being constructed. It

-See HANFORD TOUR/PAGE TWO

Rep. Smith named chair of House Republican Caucus Budget Committee

SALEM-Rep. Greg Smith (R-Heppner) has been tapped by House Republican Leader Mike McLane (R-Powell Butte) to head up the House Republican Caucus Budget Committee.



Rep. Greg Smith

The group is charged with tracking issues related to the state budget, reviewing pending budget bills, and advising the House Republican Caucus, particularly Leader McLane, on these issues.

"I am honored by the opportunity to use my experience in regards to the state budget to help my fellow caucus members,"

said Smith. "These issues can be very complex and I believe the knowledge I bring to them will be helpful."

Smith is serving his seventh term as a member of the Oregon House of Representatives. He is the longest-serving member on the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. He currently serves as Chair of the Joint Committee on Ways and Means Subcommittee on General Government.

To learn more information, contact Smith at 541-377-0000, or email rep.gregsmith@state.or.us.

Businesses invited to participate in St. Pat's welcome page

Area businesses are invited to welcome St. Patrick's weekend visitors to our community and inform them of available goods and services by including ads in a special color spread in our March

12 edition. Deadline for ad submission is March 7 at 5 p.m. Contact Megan at 541-676-9228 or megan@rapidserve.net for more information or to schedule an ad.

Coal terminal project passes milestone with three DEQ permits

The Morrow Pacific project passed a milestone recently when the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) issued air quality, water quality and construction stormwater permits for the Coyote Island Terminal coal export project in Boardman.

The Coyote Island Terminal is a coal export project proposed by Ambre Energy at the Port of Morrow in Boardman. If the project is completed, Ambre Energy would bring up to 8.8 million tons of coal a year by train from Montana and/or Wyoming to Boardman. The company would store the coal in covered storage buildings at the Port of Morrow before transferring it to barges using an enclosed conveyor system. The barges would then take the coal down the Columbia River to Port Westward in Clatskanie, where crews would transfer

it onto ocean-going ships bound for Asia.

"As we've said all along, we are committed to meeting the high environmental standards set by the state of Oregon. By issuing these three permits after a rigorous process, the Department of Environmental Quality has affirmed that the project complies with environmental rules and regulations of the state of Oregon," said Clark Moseley, CEO, Morrow Pacific project.

In a statement by the DEQ, the agency states, "DEQ is issuing air quality, water quality and construction stormwater permits for the project because, as proposed, they comply with all relevant environmental rules and regulations. The permits went through a rigorous internal review and an extensive public process involving more than 16,500

public comments."

"After considering the comments received, DEQ has also concluded that a further water quality certification—called a 401 certification—is appropriate for the project. DEQ is consulting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Ambre Energy on the next steps for this certification," the statement continued.

In addition to the DEQ permits, the project is currently seeking permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Department of State Lands.

The DEQ stresses that "issuance of these permits does not mean that the project has been approved to proceed. Rather, it means that the standards for these particular DEQ permits have been met."

The project has been met with a wide range of responses, from fervent support to equally vehement

opposition. The DEQ says that, based on comments the agency has received, some people "question the agency's limited role in the permitting process." Some people want climate change considered as part of the process, while others have called for a federal review of coal export projects.

The project is currently seeking permits from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Oregon Department of State Lands, and is projected to be operational by the beginning of 2015. The Corps has indicated that a permitting decision will be forthcoming in the spring of 2014.

"We are committed to doing business the Oregon way, and working with local companies to strengthen our economy. We're ready to start work just as soon as we receive permits from the Corps and Oregon DSL," added Moseley.

M.C. district high school students exceed state graduation rates

High schools in the Morrow County School District have exceeded statewide average rates for high school graduation, the district announced last week.

The Oregon Department of Education released data on graduation rates for all high schools in the state for the 2012-2013 school year on Feb. 6.

The four-year cohort graduation rate looks at the number of students who received a regular

high-school diploma within four years of entering high school.

The 2012-2013 five-year cohort graduation rate is connected to students who entered their ninth-grade year in the 2008-2009 school year.

These are students who have received either a regular, modified or extended high-school diploma, and/or a GED certificate, within five years of entering high school.

Within the district,

Heppner Jr-Sr High saw a 84.21 percent four-year graduation rate and a 93.10 percent five-year rate. Irrigon Jr-Sr High was 81.25 percent for four years and 85.71 percent for five years, while Riverside Jr-Sr High had a 69.94 percent four-year rate and a 87.84 percent five-year rate.

Those compare to a statewide average of 68.7 percent for four years and 81.52 percent for five years.

"We are proud of our students, faculty, and staff

in ensuring student success in our school district," said MCSD Superintendent Dirk Dirksen. "It takes a strong community of support, planning and dedication throughout the kindergarten through 12th grade system to ensure the child graduates.

"Morrow County School District will continue to hold high expectations in relation to students passing state achievement tests and ensuring that our students are college and career ready."

MCSD students perform below state average on new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

A recent report from the Oregon Department of Education found that students in the Morrow County School District are performing at a lower rate than the statewide average on the new Kindergarten Readiness Assessment. However, the district says data from this report will allow the MCSD to pinpoint areas that need improvement so the district can better prepare young students for school.

During the start of the 2013-2014 school year, all kindergarten students who entered Oregon public schools were required to complete an early screener assessment—the Kindergarten Readiness

Assessment (KRA)—that focused on students' abilities as it relates to early math and early literacy skills. After getting to know their students, kindergarten teachers were also asked to complete a rating scale based on the students' social-emotional development, approaches to learning, and self-regulation.

The intent of the kindergarten assessment has been to provide teachers

with key information early in the school year that they can use to guide instruction to meet the individual needs of all students as well as help the Oregon Education Investment Board (OEIB) gather baseline information to help make decisions about how to use funds to address achievement gaps. The goal is to address student learning needs early so that children can start kindergarten read to learn. Some findings in the

Morrow County KRA results (total kindergarten population):

-Kindergarteners come into school having on or above average self-regulation and interpersonal skills as compared with the statewide average.

-Kindergarteners come into school with below average number and operation skills as compared with the statewide average

-See COUNTY KRA RESULTS/PAGE EIGHT

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