



# the HEPPNER GAZETTE TIMES

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## Wheatridge East is looking to expand

By Chirs Sykes

The Morrow County Board of Commissioners has approved a comprehensive letter to Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility East (WREFE), addressing the proposed amendment for the expansion of its wind energy facility. The amendment seeks approval from the Energy Facility Siting Council (EFSC) for significant changes, including the expansion of the site boundary to 79,424 acres, the construction of up to 40 additional turbines, and an increase in generating capacity to 300 megawatts (MW).



-Contributed photo

The proposal outlines several key developments:

Expansion of the micro-siting ^1 corridor to 15,341 acres.

Modification of the collection system to include approximately 94.7 miles of underground line.

Increase in battery energy storage capacity to 30 MW.

Realignment of proposed transmission lines and addition of new access roads.

Expansion of the project substation and addition of a new temporary construction yard.

Extension of the construction completion deadline to May 24, 2026.

The letter highlights the need for a new Conditional Use Permit following EFSC's review and stresses the necessity for the certifi-

cate holder to obtain zoning permits for each tax lot, facilitating better project component identification by the county.

Specific concerns raised during the EFSC public hearing on March 21, 2024, were emphasized for EFSC's consideration in their Draft Proposed Order (DPO), including:

Weed Abatement: The letter calls for clearer implementation strategies for weed control, proposing that Nextera funds a full-time county employee for weed abatement to ensure compliance with the established plan.

Road Impacts: Noting inconsistencies in the documentation regarding new roads, the commissioners have requested a condition for a Road Use Agreement to be signed and approved by Morrow County Public Works before construction begins.

Fire Suppression: Addressing potential wildfire risks, the letter suggests the

DPO include a condition for the final Operational Wildfire Mitigation Plan to be reviewed and approved by local fire protection districts, ensuring adequate resources are provided to respond to fires within the development site.

Visual Impacts: In response to public testimony, concerns were raised about the visual impact of new towers on Gleason Butte, prompting a request to limit tower construction to preserve the viewshed and ensure no interference with existing communication towers used for emergency response.

The letter was approved with a 2-0 vote, Commissioner Wenzel abstaining due to a conflict of interest.

A megawatt (MW) is a unit of power that represents one million watts. To put this into perspective, consider the following:

1 watt (W) is about the amount of power used by a small LED nightlight or a

smartphone charger when it's charging a phone.

1,000 watts (or 1 kilowatt, kW) equals the power usage of a small home appliance like a microwave or a hairdryer.

1,000,000 watts (or 1,000 kW or 1 megawatt, MW) is the equivalent of the power consumption of about 1,000 microwave ovens.

In terms of electricity generation and consumption, a megawatt is a substantial amount of power. For example, a 1 MW wind farm can generate enough electricity to supply around 200 average homes in the United States (assuming an average consumption of about 5,000 kWh per year per home and continuous generation over the year, which varies based on location and other factors).

Megawatts are commonly used to describe the capacity of large power plants, or the amount of electricity required by large entities like factories, commercial buildings, or even small towns. ^1 Micro-siting in wind energy development refers to optimizing turbine placement within a wind farm to maximize energy output and minimize environmental and social impacts. This process entails a comprehensive analysis of several factors:

Wind Resource Assessment: Evaluates local wind

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## Heppner High School begins gym floor renovation



The recent renovations of the HHS gym floor. - Picture from Heppner Jr/Sr HS Facebook.

By Annalynn Black

Heppner High School is currently undergoing a much-needed renovation to replace its gym floor. The original floors, dating back to 1963, are in dire need of an overhaul. However, refinishing the wood is not a viable option due to the delicate nature of the floor-

ing. Sanding the entire floor would expose the sparse wood and the nails holding it together, causing further damage and potential safety hazards.

When asked by the Gazette Principal Ryan Gerry revealed that discussions about renovating

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## Updates on ASA and Circuit Court building

By Chri Sykes

On April 3rd, at the Morrow County Board of Commissioners meeting, County Administrator Matt Jensen provided an update.

The county is now moving forward with the selection of an ASA advisory committee. It was explained by Bob Blackmore, the county's legal representative, during the March 20th BOC meeting, that while the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) does not require an advisory committee before the initial selection, the county may establish one if desired. As a result, the commissioners assigned Jensen with the task of initiating the advisory committee.

Jensen mentioned that the county will form an ad hoc committee consisting of representatives from the five cities within Morrow County. Three of the cities,

namely Irrigon, Boardman, and Heppner, have confirmed their participation and are in the process of selecting their representatives. Jensen has sent invitations to Ione and Lexington and will follow up with them regarding their selections. One main stipulation given to the cities is that their chosen representatives cannot have a direct, familial, or professional connection with Boardman Fire or the Morrow County Health District.

Another topic discussed was the circuit court building. Jensen informed the commissioners that a preliminary site report for several potential locations is almost complete. However, no environmental assessments have been conducted yet. Jensen mentioned the possibility of environmental issues at some of the sites. Currently, the primary

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## County approves GSI Water Solutions contract

By Chirs Sykes

GSI Water Solutions Inc. was selected after a procurement process including a Notice of Intent to Award authorized by Board of Commissioners for which no protest was filed. On March 26, 2024 Morrow and Umatilla Counties entered into an intergovernmental agreement for the project and GSI Water Solutions, presented a project overview. GSI has refined the Scope of Work for Stage 1 of the project. A detailed Scope of Work will be developed for Stages 2-4 later

(GSI) had outlined a comprehensive scope of work (SOW) and fee estimate for the Morrow and Umatilla Counties Drinking Water Investigation (DWI) project. This project is structured to unfold over a two-and-a-half-year period, funded by a grant, and entails a series of stages designed to assess, sample, and develop strategies for enhancing drinking water quality across the two counties. The project is segmented into four primary stages, with each stage carrying specific objectives, tasks, and deliverables aimed at systematically addressing the counties' drinking water challenges. Here's a breakdown of each stage and the associated costs:

Stage 1: Baseline Assessment and Prioritization

Objective: To define drinking water alternatives and priorities for data col-

lection and analysis by early 3rd quarter of 2024, setting the stage for subsequent actions. Key Activities:

Review existing water quality and hydrogeologic data.

Assess Public Water Systems (PWS).

Develop a Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and identify well sampling locations.

Conduct workshops on data management, communications, and drinking water alternatives.

Deliverables: Include a data management protocol, QAPP, communications plan, and identification of sampling areas. Budget: Stage 1 is part of the initial budget allocation within the total \$1,320,806 contract budget, with specific Stage 1 costs detailed in the proposal but not isolated here for clarity.

Stage 2: Feasibility of Public Water System Connection

Objective: To evaluate the feasibility of extending PWS service to identified areas based on the findings from Stage 1. Key Activities:

Conduct targeted well sampling.

Analyze feasibility of PWS connection.

Update stakeholders on findings and preliminary recommendations.

Deliverables: Include an outreach plan, feasibility evaluations, and preliminary DWAP recommendations. Budget: Reserved

from the total budget, subject to authorization based on Stage 1 findings.

Stage 3: Follow-Up Sampling and Feasibility of Alternate Water Supply Options

Objective: To refine drinking water options with additional sampling and analysis, focusing on non-PWS alternatives. Key Activities:

Targeted follow-up sampling.

Refine feasibility evaluations for PWS connections and alternate options.

Deliverables: Refined feasibility evaluations and recommendations for DWAP. Budget: Part of the \$805,806 budget reserve for Stages 2-4, requiring authorization for use.

Stage 4: Development of Drinking Water Action Plans (DWAP)

Objective: To finalize DWAP based on comprehensive analysis and stakeholder input, detailing implementation plans for both PWS connections and alternate solutions. Key Activities:

Development of phased DWAP.

Solicitation of feedback from counties, agencies, and stakeholders.

Deliverables: A finalized DWAP with an implementation roadmap. Budget: Included in the budget reserve for Stages 2-4, subject to authorization and refinement of project scope.

Financial Overview  
The total estimat-

ed cost for the project is \$1,320,806, which encompasses all stages, EPA Grant Compliance and Reporting, and a contingency for unforeseen tasks. Stage 1 will proceed with an initial allocation, while the remaining budget for Stages 2-4 (\$805,806) is set aside as a budget reserve, pending authorization based on the outcomes of the initial stage.

This phased approach allows Morrow County and its stakeholders to adapt the investigation based on initial findings, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently to areas of highest impact. The project's flexibility, detailed planning, and structured budgeting strategy to address drinking water quality issues in Morrow and Umatilla Counties.

The first steering committee meeting is May 11<sup>th</sup>



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