

## **Grays Harbor PUD Stalls on Radar Ridge Wind Project Price Increases**

### **Local News**

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Aberdeen- The Grays Harbor PUD Board of Commissioners did not take action on a resolution calling for an increase of \$1.14 million in the District's pre-construction budget for the Radar Ridge Wind Project. Instead, the Board called for better assurances that any additional investment would result in successful and timely issuance of needed permits for the project, and that once the project is permitted, it would be an attractive investment should the PUD choose to sell its interest in the future.

"The Board made it clear, before we head further down this road, we need to know our investments will result in a viable renewable energy project that will be both environmentally responsible and economically wise," said Rick Lovely, General Manager of Grays Harbor PUD. "We have too many 'what ifs' right now and need commitments from federal and state agencies to ensure we have the timelines and resources in place to move this project forward in a timely manner. We also need to conduct some additional analysis on the value of the project based on the latest information on forward markets to make sure it will be a valuable asset well into the future."

Grays Harbor PUD is one of four Public Utility Districts participating in the project along with Project Developer, Energy Northwest. Grays Harbor's share of the project investment thus far has been approximately \$845,000. The project site is located in Pacific County near Naselle. The project participants are currently in the permitting process and have been working closely with state and federal agencies to ensure the wind project doesn't adversely impact the regional population of marbled murrelets, a species of bird listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. The Participants have conducted three years of unprecedented studies which show the project will not have a significant impact on the marbled murrelet and have submitted a draft habitat conservation plan and Environmental Information Document to US Fish and Wildlife for review. The documents will be used to determine if a more costly and lengthy Environmental Impact Statement is necessary in order to secure a permit.

"The budget increase anticipates having to complete an EIS," said Lovely. "We have taken an environmentally responsible approach to this project but don't feel it is prudent to invest more money without a strong and clear commitment from US Fish and Wildlife Service that we can move this process forward and bring it to a close in a timely manner," he said, adding that the project is time sensitive because the participants have been awarded \$122 million in Clean Renewable Energy Bonds to finance the project. The bonds must be sold by January of 2013, and permitting must be completed to move forward with the financing.

In addition, the Grays Harbor PUD Commissioners want assurances that the lease for the wind project site with Department of Natural Resources can be extended if additional time is needed to secure permits. "The Board wants to make sure that we have covered all of our bases and have built in contingency plans if there are any unexpected delays in the process," said Lovely.