

Energy Overlay Zone Planning Commission Statement

September 20, 2004

Dana Peck

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Executive Summary

As with the landfill siting process two decades ago, the County is pursuing an innovative, effective approach to a planning issue – energy facility siting – and is attracting both compliments and criticism for its efforts. But like the landfill, properly sited energy facilities can provide a huge benefit to the County’s residents.

The Planning Commission is being asked to decide whether the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, the County Code development regulations, and the zoning map should be recommended to the Board of County Commissioners for approval. The staff report identifies the standards of review to be used by the Planning Commission in considering that recommendation.

As the project proponent, I endorse Planning Commission approval of that recommendation on the following grounds:

- The proposed amendments implement an overlay zone that is a refinement of goals and policies already present in the comprehensive plan (see table). As proposed, the overlay amendments – based as they are on a programmatic environmental impact statement – further those goals and policies by establishing a more systematic, predictable planning approach to energy facility siting.

Table of Overlay-Related Comprehensive Plan Goals and Policies

Goal	Goal Language	Page
Energy/Utilities	Energy conservation and production should be encouraged in Klickitat County. (Policy 14)	57
Economic Development	To strengthen and diversify Klickitat County’s economic base and promote employment.	45
Agriculture	To support and protect agriculture.	36
Environmental Protection	To preserve the environmental quality of Klickitat County.	27
Public Involvement	To encourage full citizen participation in public decision-making.	67

- The programmatic environmental impact statement on which the proposed amendments are based is the gold standard in providing technical information and public input to decisionmakers. It was produced by a highly credible team of professionals selected through a competitive bidding process; overseen by staff and the County’s legal counsel at Foster Pepper and Shefelman ; meets the criteria established for programmatic (nonproject) environmental impact statements in WAC 197-11-442; the final EIS fully responds to all public comments; and it provides the framework for evaluating multiple alternative approaches, resulting in the preferred alternative used to craft the proposed amendments.

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- 1 • As proposed, the amendments recognize the likelihood of future energy project
2 proposals in Klickitat County; the nature of energy facility siting; and create a
3 process where the Comprehensive Plan's emphasis on public interest, health and
4 safety, economic development, preservation of agricultural land, and the general
5 welfare are the starting point for energy developer siting decisions, unlike the
6 current process.
7
- 8 • The proposed amendments, if recommended and approved, create a well-defined,
9 systematic process that uses County-funded technical analyses – the final EIS –
10 and public input to identify sites that appear acceptable for energy facility
11 development pending SEPA review. Future energy developers will have every
12 incentive to abide by the overlay zone guidance, in effect making their siting
13 decisions in accordance with the County's technical analysis and public input, and
14 meeting the goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan, from the start.
15 And a proposed project can still be denied under SEPA if – after performing site-
16 specific environmental reviews – significant, adverse environmental impacts
17 cannot be mitigated.
18
- 19 • This Commission should feel confident that making the decision to recommend
20 approving these decisions to the Board of County Commissioners is fully in
21 keeping with the standards of review listed on pages 2-3 of the staff report, and
22 that energy facilities sited through the energy overlay zone process will be
23 consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, strongly support the general welfare, and
24 be in the best interest of the County's residents.
25

26 What the County knows for a fact is that it possesses resources that attract energy
27 developers. What we learned in the late 1990's is that energy crises can create a rush of
28 those developers. What is proposed here is a way to put County-funded technical
29 analyses and pre-screened sites at the front of the facility siting process rather than
30 waiting for strangers to make siting decisions without public input.
31

32 And on the economic development side, if the effect of creating a more systematic
33 permitting environment for energy projects attracts one wind project sooner than would
34 otherwise occur, that could mean another generation of ranching for families benefiting
35 from that project.
36
37

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1 Introduction

2

3 My name is Dana Peck and I am appearing today as both the Director of the County's
4 Economic Development Department and as the Executive Director of the Klickitat
5 County Public Economic Development Authority, or EDA Board. The EDA Board
6 develops and oversees the implementation of the County's economic development
7 strategy. In that capacity, it serves in the role referenced in the Comprehensive Plan
8 under the economic development goal's policy #8 on page 46:

9

10 The overall economic development plan committee and the rural
11 development committee shall be advisory on all economic development
12 projects and issues.

13

14 As the project proponent, my statement will provide this Commission with a factual
15 framework of how the energy overlay zone concept was developed; why it meets the
16 standards this Commission uses to assess whether to make a positive recommendation
17 about the proposal; and how public involvement on certain energy projects is better
18 served by the proposal than by the conditional use permit process. I will also describe
19 why a programmatic environmental impact statement was performed, the alternatives
20 evaluated in the preparation of that document, and how that document contributes to the
21 Planning Commission's deliberations.

22

23 In addition, as a former energy project developer, I will briefly review the pre-permit
24 development process, an aspect of project development that typically occurs with no
25 public input. I feel this information will assist the Planning Commission in
26 understanding the improvements the proposed amendments afford both to local residents
27 and to project developers.

28

29 Before I move to the rest of my presentation, I would like to first address two recurring
30 misconceptions of the energy overlay zone process and the related environmental impact
31 statement.

32

33 First, the proposed siting process will not allow energy facilities to be sited in Klickitat
34 County without environmental review and public input. Inaccurate statements have been
35 made in newspaper editorials and various letters to the editor on this point, and they are
36 just that, inaccurate. SEPA review, various local and state permits, and several levels of
37 appeal allow for public input on each and every energy project under the proposed
38 comprehensive plan amendments as I will demonstrate in the course of this presentation.
39 In fact, the proposed energy overlay zone gives the public considerably more control over
40 energy siting. It places public input ahead of developer decisionmaking rather than
41 forcing the public to react to siting decisions after they have been made. And a proposed
42 project can still be denied under SEPA if – after performing site-specific environmental
43 reviews – significant, adverse environmental impacts cannot be mitigated.

44

45 And second, assertions continue to be made that there hasn't been enough opportunity for
46 public involvement. The programmatic environmental impact statement used by the

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1 County is the gold standard for public input on policy issues. The scoping hearing and
2 the draft EIS hearing provided public input opportunities prior to action by either the
3 Planning Commission or the County Commission. The EIS document, which I will
4 discuss more fully later in this presentation, provides professionally developed technical
5 information and a range of alternatives for use by decisionmakers and the public. Not
6 only have the public input timelines mandated by state statute and regulation been met,
7 but the draft EIS comment period was extended for a month. Copies of the draft and final
8 EIS have been available in various formats and in the County's libraries, and we even
9 found a way to make the final EIS Internet-accessible. It is unusual for a non-GMA
10 county to take this step of preparing a programmatic EIS for a comprehensive plan
11 amendment, and it is a step not taken by the Gorge Commission on its management plan
12 or the Forest Service on the Klickitat Trail project. Separately, I have attended thirty-one
13 meetings explaining this process to local groups and answering their questions as listed
14 on page G4 of the final EIS. And now there are Planning Commission and County
15 Commission public hearings on the subject, as well.

16 17 18 **History of the Energy Overlay Zone Proposal**

19
20 The EDA Board and the Economic Development Department became the project
21 proponents through a series of steps which provide a framework for explaining how the
22 proposed amendments were developed.

23
24 It is the mission of the County's economic development strategy to contribute to the
25 implementation of the County Comprehensive Plan by fostering an economic climate that
26 preserves the rural, agricultural nature of Klickitat County through steps that create jobs
27 for local residents and encourage the expansion of the County's property tax base.

28
29 Simply put, we are constantly looking for ways to provide more jobs for local residents,
30 fund services without raising taxes, and provide opportunities that give the County's
31 young people a chance to work and live where they grew up. This is in keeping with the
32 EDA Board's acknowledged role in advising on economic development issues, cited
33 previously, as well as the Comprehensive Plan's specific economic development goal:

34
35 To strengthen and diversify Klickitat County's economic base and
36 promote employment. (Page 45)

37
38 One of the things the EDA Board looked at in drafting the County's economic
39 development strategy is a list of the area's competitive advantages. The presence of the
40 Bonneville and Klickitat PUD transmission lines and the Williams natural gas pipeline
41 are obvious features of the local economy. But changes in the energy industry have made
42 two other natural elements of the County, wind and sunshine, take on an economic value,
43 as well. Few places in the nation have the combination of wind, sunshine, a gas pipeline,
44 and major transmission corridors found in Klickitat County. Taken together, a
45 competitive advantage in energy production seemed to exist here.

46

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1 The West Coast energy crisis of 1999-2001 reinforced that belief. Multiple energy
2 projects were under consideration county-wide – mostly natural gas combustion turbines,
3 but also diesel generators and wind projects. While this momentary energy project rush
4 showed the potential for energy development to become an important part of the local
5 economy, it also highlighted the need for a more systematic energy facility siting
6 methodology. Energy crises have been a recurring, if often forgotten, part of the national
7 economy since 1973. Future energy crises are likely. Providing a local planning
8 framework for energy development offered a way to assure the County was ready for the
9 next cycle and that is also the central reason for proposing the energy overlay zone
10 concept in addition to the economic development implications.

11
12 Goal 2 Objective 2 of the strategic plan for economic development contains the specific
13 reference to creation of an energy overlay zone, a project that was endorsed by the EDA
14 Board during its July 25, 2001 public meeting and subsequently made a part of the
15 strategic plan update. A review of the Comprehensive Plan following passage of that
16 resolution showed that the Comprehensive Plan had recognized energy development was
17 an element of land use planning. Specifically, Policy #14 under “Public
18 Services/Utilities” states that:

19
20 Energy conservation and production should be encouraged in Klickitat
21 County. (Page 57)

22
23 While it would have been possible, given the existing Comprehensive Plan language, to
24 immediately develop an energy overlay zone proposal for consideration by the Planning
25 Commission, staff determined that the potential environmental impacts and the
26 importance of public involvement suggested the need for preparation of a programmatic
27 environmental impact statement. Basing the proposed plan amendment on a
28 programmatic environmental impact statement – an action that is encouraged by SEPA
29 but is rarely done, also assures the greatest public participation, another Comprehensive
30 Plan goal:

31
32
33 To encourage full citizen participation in public decision-making.
34 (page 67).
35

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1 Rationale for Proposed Amendments

2
3 It is clear that energy projects have been both proposed and developed in Klickitat
4 County, and it seems likely that they will be proposed and developed in the future. It is
5 also clear that the Comprehensive Plan has elements that encourage energy project
6 development. However, the County's existing zoning ordinances do not specifically
7 address energy development and no consistent policy for energy siting is in place. What
8 these proposed amendments do is further the objectives and goals of the comprehensive
9 plan by establishing a systematic, consistent framework that, in effect, allows the County
10 and its residents to plan in advance for energy project development rather than react to
11 individual energy project proposals.

12
13 The proposed framework differs from the existing conditional use permit process in ways
14 which provide increased benefit to the public's interest and general welfare for a simple
15 reason: The public, through the energy overlay zone process, identifies publicly
16 acceptable sites to energy developers rather than responds to siting decisions made by
17 developers without public input. And both the public and the developer benefit from the
18 existence of a publicly funded technical analysis, the final EIS, which provides
19 considerable information on the County and can be used as a guide for evaluating
20 environmental analyses provided by project developers, as well as shaping mitigation
21 measures.

22
23 A specific example of how the current conditional use process works will help show how
24 the public benefit is served by the energy overlay zone approach.

25
26 Energy facility developers working under the conditional user permit process make their
27 siting decisions with no public input. In fact, considerable effort is expended to keep the
28 project confidential for two reasons: competitors might learn of the proposed project and
29 attempt to purchase the site; and local land values inevitably go up when a project is
30 known to be looking for a site. This was certainly the case with the Kenetech project I
31 managed. No information was made available to the public until the land needed for the
32 project had been acquired. Similar activity occurs with combustion turbine development,
33 where land requirements are smaller but water rights are critical.

34
35 Once the project is announced and the conditional use permit process begins, three
36 additional concerns emerge, all of which are resolved by the energy overlay zone
37 approach:

- 38
- 39 • Environmental studies used by the County are paid for by the developer,
40 prompting public skepticism about the results.
 - 41
 - 42 • The cumulative impact analysis of the project-specific (as opposed to
43 programmatic) environmental impact statement only has to look at -the immediate
44 vicinity of the actual project.
 - 45

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1 The Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement Process

2
3 Although the preferred alternative in the final EIS, which includes the proposed energy
4 overlay boundaries, can be modified by the Planning Commission in the legislative
5 process, they were selected after reviewing the various energy technologies, geography,
6 and possible procedures for siting energy facilities through a programmatic
7 environmental impact statement.

8
9 Programmatic EIS documents are not as familiar to the general public as project-specific
10 EIS documents. A project-specific EIS addresses a proposed project and is narrowly
11 focused on the specific effects of that project on a small geographic area. Public
12 participants attending project EIS scoping meetings generally find themselves reviewing
13 elaborate materials describing the project, sometimes leading to the comment, “They’ve
14 already made all their decisions, why are they asking me?” Using a programmatic EIS
15 allows the County to consider the “big picture” by conducting comprehensive analyses,
16 addressing larger cumulative impacts than would occur in a project EIS; evaluating
17 possible technologies, as well as geographic and procedural alternatives; and proposing
18 mitigation measures before there is a specific project. This allows the public much
19 greater opportunity to effect the contents of the EIS but can lead to the question, “What
20 am I supposed to comment on?” since the programmatic EIS does, unlike the typical
21 project EIS, start with more of a blank slate before receiving public input.

22
23 Development of a programmatic EIS made it possible to evaluate multiple alternatives for
24 the proposed energy overlay zone within a framework established by Washington State
25 statutes and regulations. Programmatic, also called nonproject, environmental impact
26 statements are defined under WAC 197-11-442, “Contents of EIS on nonproject
27 proposals”:

28
29 **WAC 197-11-442 Contents of EIS on nonproject proposals.**(1) The
30 lead agency shall have more flexibility in preparing EISs on nonproject
31 proposals, because there is normally less detailed information available on
32 their environmental impacts and on any subsequent project proposals. The
33 EIS may be combined with other planning documents.

34
35 (2) The lead agency shall discuss impacts and alternatives in the level of
36 detail appropriate to the scope of the nonproject proposal and to the level
37 of planning for the proposal. Alternatives should be emphasized. In
38 particular, agencies are encouraged to describe the proposal in terms of
39 alternative means of accomplishing a stated objective (see WAC [197-11-](#)
40 [060](#)(3)). Alternatives including the proposed action should be analyzed at
41 a roughly comparable level of detail, sufficient to evaluate their
42 comparative merits (this does not require devoting the same number of
43 pages in an EIS to each alternative).

44
45 (3) If the nonproject proposal concerns a specific geographic area, site
46 specific analyses are not required, but may be included for areas of

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1 specific concern. The EIS should identify subsequent actions that would
2 be undertaken by other agencies as a result of the nonproject proposal,
3 such as transportation and utility systems.
4

5 (4) The EIS's discussion of alternatives for a comprehensive plan,
6 community plan, or other areawide zoning or for shoreline or land use
7 plans shall be limited to a general discussion of the impacts of alternate
8 proposals for policies contained in such plans, for land use or shoreline
9 designations, and for implementation measures. The lead agency is not
10 required under SEPA to examine all conceivable policies, designations, or
11 implementation measures but should cover a range of such topics. The EIS
12 content may be limited to a discussion of alternatives which have been
13 formally proposed or which are, while not formally proposed, reasonably
14 related to the proposed action.
15

16 The Department of Ecology's Green Book on SEPA implementation further explains the
17 programmatic (nonproject) EIS process:
18

19 Obvious nonproject actions are local land use and environmental legislation
20 such as comprehensive plans and areawide zoning adoption and
21 amendments.... (Page 189)
22

23 Since there is not a specific project to shape the content of the programmatic EIS, public
24 input at the scoping meeting, definition of what is to be studied, and establishing
25 alternatives take a considerable amount of effort. Four interrelated alternatives were
26 identified for analysis in the energy overlay zone EIS process:
27

28 **Technology:** What energy technologies are likely to be developed in the
29 area within the next twenty years, and which ones of those technologies
30 were most likely to be consistent with the comprehensive plan? Ultimately,
31 wind, solar, natural gas-fired thermal, and biomass technologies were
32 identified as appropriate for inclusion in the overlay. Using projections of
33 likely energy facility development in the region over the next twenty years,
34 for purposes of analysis the EIS assumed that up to 1,750 megawatts of new
35 natural gas thermal projects, 100 megawatts of biomass projects, 1,000
36 megawatts of wind projects, and a small number of solar project might be
37 constructed in the County.

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1 **Geography:** After identifying the presence of facilities or resources that
2 could support the selected technologies (proximity to gas pipeline,
3 proximity to water, proximity to transmission, proximity to the biomass
4 resource, presence of adequate wind as identified in the NWSEED mapping
5 project), further analyses were conducted to assess the effect of facilities
6 using those technologies on land use and sensitive habitats. An initial
7 overlay zone boundary was established using these criteria. At the final EIS
8 stage, in response to comments it was determined that changes in the
9 combustion turbine industry had occurred and a limited geographic
10 alternative was developed to further narrow energy overlay zone sites
11 eligible for natural gas-fired combustion turbine development.

12
13 **Procedural:** Two possible administrative procedures were developed, one
14 which permits energy development outright within the Overlay (following
15 requirements of the ordinance, SEPA review, and compliance with state and
16 federal laws), and still allows development outside of the Overlay through
17 the Conditional Use Process and a second which is similar to the first but
18 would prohibit energy development outside of the Overlay.

19
20 **No Action:** Allow unplanned energy development through the conditional
21 use and SEPA review process.

22
23 Once this framework was established, each alternative was evaluated according to its
24 likely environmental impact, including cumulative impacts, in the following categories:

- 25
26
 - 27 • Air
 - 28 • Noise
 - 29 • Vegetation and Wildlife
 - 30 • Geologic and Flood Hazards
 - 31 • Water Resources
 - 32 • Cultural Resources
 - 33 • Visual Resources and Aesthetics
 - 34 • Public Health and Safety
 - 35 • Land Use and Recreation
 - 36 • Socioeconomics
 - 37 • Transportation
 - 38 • Public Services and Utilities

39 Both the draft and final EIS documents were circulated to an extensive distribution list
40 and both County libraries. Notices of availability were published in the County's
41 newspapers, print and CD copies were available, and the final EIS was made available on
42 the Internet. Also, the draft EIS comment period was extended 30 days beyond the
43 statutory period.

44

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1 The Final EIS provides an effective mechanism for implementing a key Comprehensive
2 Plan goal, “Environment/General” and particularly Policy #1:

3
4 **Goal:** To preserve the environmental quality of Klickitat County.

5
6 **Policy #1:** The capability of the land, water, and air to sustain human
7 activities should be a determining factor in making land use decisions.
8 Land capability maps should be prepared and referred to when decisions
9 on land distribution, development, or zoning must be made.

10 (Page 27)

11
12 Based on the overall analysis provided by the document, it identifies the preferred
13 alternative as the Limited Geographic Alternative with Procedural Alternative 1. This
14 alternative would allow gas-fired, biomass, wind, and solar facilities to be sited within the
15 Energy Overlay without a conditional use process. Projects outside the Overlay would be
16 required to obtain a conditional use permit. Proposals within the Overlay would be
17 required to complete the Energy Overlay permitting, County SEPA review process (a
18 proposed project can still be denied under SEPA if – after performing site-specific
19 environmental reviews – significant, adverse environmental impacts cannot be mitigated)
20 and obtain all necessary local, state, and federal permits and approvals before starting
21 construction. Gas-fired plants would be restricted to areas within the Overlay that have at
22 least 500 acre-feet of water and within two miles of an existing gas pipeline. Biomass
23 facilities would be restricted to the White Salmon - Bingen area.

24 25 26 **How the Proposal Meets Comprehensive Plan Amendment Standards**

27 **How the Proposal Meets Code and Zoning Amendment Standards**

28
29 The Planning Commission is being asked to decide whether the proposed amendments to
30 the Comprehensive Plan, the County Code development regulations, and the zoning map
31 should be recommended to the Board of County Commissioners. The staff report
32 identifies the standards of review to be used by the Planning Commission in considering
33 that recommendation. As the project proponent, I endorse Planning Commission
34 approval of that recommendation on the following grounds:

- 35
- 36 • The proposed amendments implement an overlay zone that is a refinement of
37 goals and policies already present in the comprehensive plan (see table). As
38 proposed, the overlay amendments – based as they are on a programmatic
39 environmental impact statement – further those goals and policies by establishing
40 a more systematic, predictable planning approach to energy facility siting.

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- The programmatic environmental impact statement on which the proposed amendments are based is the gold standard in providing technical information and public input to decisionmakers. It was produced by a highly credible team of professionals selected through a competitive bidding process; overseen by staff and the County's legal counsel at Foster Pepper and Shefelman ; meets the criteria established in WAC 197-11-442; the final EIS fully responds to all public comments; and it provided the framework for evaluating multiple alternative approaches, resulting in a preferred alternative used to craft the proposed amendments.
- As proposed, the amendments recognize the likelihood of future energy project proposals in Klickitat County; the nature of energy facility siting; and creates a process where the public interest, health and safety, and the general welfare are the starting point for energy developer siting decisions, unlike the current process.
- The proposed amendments, if recommended and approved, create a well-defined, systematic process that uses County-funded technical analyses – the final EIS – and public input to identify sites that appear acceptable for energy facility development pending SEPA review. Future energy developers will have every incentive to abide by the overlay zone guidance, in effect making their siting decisions in accordance with the County's technical analysis and public input, and meeting the goals and policies of the County Comprehensive Plan, from the start.

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Public Input Opportunities if the Proposal is Accepted

It is important to recognize that, at this time, public concerns exist over whether the proposed process will somehow eliminate public involvement with energy facility siting when if the permitting process shifts from the conditional use permit review to administrative review. On the basis of comments made on the draft EIS, as well as in other arenas, the underlying assumptions in that concern appear to be:

- SEPA and other permits administered by the County, state, and Federal agencies will not be required.
- Opportunities for public review and appeal of permitting decisions will not be available.

All permitting requirements, with the exception of the conditional use permit inside the Overlay, will still be in force under the proposed energy overlay zone process. Inside the Overlay, the conditional use permit would be replaced by an Overlay permit approved by the Planning Department, which can be administratively appealed. With respect to SEPA review, the County will be able to evaluate the applicant's SEPA information in the context of the County's own energy-focused information base, the programmatic EIS. The availability of the programmatic EIS greatly strengthens the County's ability to evaluate developer submissions, just as it should allow the developer a comprehensive starting point for preparing their SEPA materials. Site-specific environmental reviews performed by developers will provide additional information to the County's information base, as will actual information gained through monitoring energy facility operation. And, as stated before, a proposed project can still be denied under SEPA if – after performing site-specific environmental reviews – significant, adverse environmental impacts cannot be mitigated.

Public review and appeal of permits issued by state or Federal agencies are unaffected by the proposed amendments. County administrative permitting decisions are specifically addressed in the proposed amendments to the development regulations:

19.39:8 Appeal.

A. Appeals may be filed to the Board of Adjustment within 20 days of the decision on project consistency with this chapter, as provided in chapter 19.60.

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1 B. If other appeal hearings are provided or available, then all appeal
2 hearings shall be consolidated before a single hearing body. If more than
3 one appeal hearing is provided or available and is before a hearing body
4 other than the board of adjustment, then the energy resource permit appeal
5 hearing shall be before the board of county commissioners or to such
6 hearing officer as may be designated by the board. The decision of the
7 board of county commissioners shall be final unless appealed to superior
8 court within twenty-one days.
9

10 In reviewing how the energy overlay zone would affect project permitting and public
11 involvement, it is important to remember that the conditional use permit process is
12 designed to deal with a developer's siting decisions made in the absence of public
13 involvement. The energy overlay process creates areas that are pre-screened through a
14 programmatic EIS and this legislative process, both of which provide for pre-
15 development public involvement in the siting decision. Developers choosing those pre-
16 screened sites have already been a part of a public decisionmaking process that exempts
17 them from the conditional use approach. If the preferred alternative identified in the
18 final EIS is selected, developers choosing sites outside the energy overlay zone will
19 remain subject to the conditional use permit process.
20
21

22 Conclusion

23
24 As with the landfill siting process two decades ago, the County is pursuing an innovative,
25 effective approach to a planning issue and is attracting both compliments and criticism
26 for its efforts. But like the landfill, properly sited energy facilities can provide a huge
27 benefit to the County's residents.
28

29 What the County knows for a fact is that it possesses resources that attract energy
30 developers. What we learned in the late 1990's is that energy crises can create a rush of
31 those developers. What is proposed here is a way to put County-funded technical
32 analyses and pre-screened sites at the front of the facility siting process rather than
33 waiting for strangers to make siting decisions without public input.
34

35 And on the economic development side, if the effect of creating a more systematic
36 permitting environment for energy projects attracts one wind project sooner than would
37 otherwise occur, that could mean another generation of ranching for families benefiting
38 from that project.
39

40 In closing, I would like to reiterate three points:
41

- 42 • The proposed approach to energy facility siting provides considerable opportunity
43 for public review, comment, and appeal.
44

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- 1 • The proposal, like the landfill decision two decades ago, shows the County at its
2 best – taking the lead in finding innovative ways to preserve the rural, agricultural
3 nature of the County, strengthen the local economy, and provide real benefits to
4 local residents.
5
- 6 • This Commission should feel confident that making the decision to recommend
7 approving these decisions to the Board of County Commissioners is fully in
8 keeping with the standards of review listed on pages 2-3 of the staff report, and
9 that energy facilities sited through the energy overlay zone process will be
10 consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, strongly support the general welfare, and
11 be in the best interest of the County’s residents.
12
- 13 Thank you.
14