



The Columbia

Washington state agency approves wind farm for 2nd time

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OLYMPIA, Wash. (AP) -- For a second time, a Washington state agency has recommended that the governor approve a proposed central Washington wind farm despite objections from Kittitas County citizens and officials.

The state Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council had recommended that Gov. Chris Gregoire approve the Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project in March, but Gregoire asked the council to reconsider whether the turbines should be set farther away from landowners.

Neighboring landowners and local officials have argued against the project for five years, saying it will have negative environmental and visual impacts.

The council recommended on Tuesday that the governor approve a modified permit, which could increase the distance between turbines and the homes of landowners who aren't participating in the project.

The permit modification provides that the developer will give "highest priority" to increasing the distance of the turbines from landowners, even beyond a minimum setback of four times the turbines' height.

The council retains final approval authority of the final turbine siting.

"The council heard the governor loud and clear and has taken additional steps to help minimize potential visual impacts raised by some nonparticipating landowners in the affected area," Chairman Jim Luce said in a statement.

Gregoire has 60 days to approve or reject the revised proposal.

Proposed 12 miles northwest of Ellensburg in central Washington, the project would generate between 98-195 megawatts of electricity. It would entail an estimated 65 wind turbines.

The project has been proposed by Horizon Wind Energy, which was sold from Goldman Sachs Group to EDP Energias de Portugal SA for \$2.15 billion in March.