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February 2, 2010

Jim Luce, Chair
Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council
905 Plum Street SE
PO Box 43172
Olympia, WA 98504-3172

RE: Desert Claim Wind Power Project
EFSEC Recommendation Letter dated December 4, 2009

Dear Chairman Luce:

Pursuant to RCW 80.50.100, I have approved and executed the enclosed Site Certification Agreement for the Desert Claim Wind Power Project in Kittitas County, with the terms and conditions as recommended by the Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC).

After review of EFSEC's record, my decision on this project was shaped by three important considerations.

First, the government of Kittitas County has agreed to the project as recommended by EFSEC. My preference is to defer to local decision-makers on siting energy facilities, though I must also consider the needs of our citizens for abundant, affordable and environmentally-preferred power. In this case, there was good alignment between state and local government views.

Kittitas County was a party to the EFSEC proceeding and formally withdrew the county's objections to the project, which was downsized and reconfigured from the project previously considered by the county. Kittitas County filed a statement that "[d]ue to an agreement reached between Kittitas County and the applicant, the County withdraws what opposition it raised to the Desert Claim Wind Power Project." The county's designated member of EFSEC signed EFSEC's unanimous recommendation in support of the project, albeit with comments about improvements needed to the siting process.



Second, EFSEC required the project proponent to evaluate the location of each wind turbine in relation to each nearby residence, with the goal of limiting the number of turbines near each residence and increasing the setback distance.

The input of citizens that live near these projects is important to me, and I pay close attention to their concerns. This is why I remanded EFSEC's recommendation in a prior wind power project in Kittitas County and required EFSEC to give the highest priority to increasing setbacks from existing residences in a turbine-specific siting process. I am pleased that EFSEC has required the same procedure for the Desert Claim Wind Power Project.

Public input regarding the Desert Claim Wind Power Project included concerns expressed by some local landowners. Their concerns did not go unheeded. Environmental concerns were investigated and addressed in agreements, and mitigation measures and turbine-specific siting requirements were imposed to address the visual impacts on non-participating landowners. I am pleased that EFSEC responded to these landowners' concerns by imposing conditions to maximize setbacks and minimize the number of turbines within 2500 feet of individual residences, along with other mitigation conditions such as shadow flicker controls. I am satisfied that EFSEC has addressed the interests affected by the Project, including the visual impacts, to the extent that it can through mitigation measures.

Third, this project will provide jobs for the county and the state, jobs that are sorely needed during our economic recovery. The project is another sign of the importance of the clean energy economy to the future of our state. The Economic Development Group of Kittitas County supported the project because experience has shown "these types of projects can be good neighbors and make a positive contribution to the economic vitality of Kittitas County" and "wind projects result in a lot of positive local economic activity, creating jobs and generating significant tax revenues."

Local support for this project demonstrates that EFSEC found an effective balance in its recommendation for the Desert Claim Wind Power Project. I commend EFSEC for its good work.

Sincerely,



Christine O. Gregoire
Governor

Enclosure