



# Oregon

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**To:** Energy Facility Siting Council

**From:** Sarah Esterson, Senior Policy Advisor

**Date:** April 9, 2021

**Subject:** Agenda Item C (Action Item):  
Montague Wind Power Facility – Request to Amend Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan for the April 22-23, 2021 EFSC Meeting

**Attachments:** Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan

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## STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Oregon Department of Energy (Department) recommends the Energy Facility Siting Council (Council) approve the request by Montague Wind Power Facility, LLC (certificate holder) to amend the Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (WMMP) of the Montague Wind Power Facility site certificate.

## BACKGROUND

The Department received a request to amend the WMMP for Montague Wind Power Facility in February 2021. Montague Wind Power Facility is an operational 200 megawatt (MW) wind facility with 56 wind turbines in Gilliam County.

The facility originally received site certificate approval from the Council in September 2010 for a 404 MW wind energy facility. Subsequent to the September 2010 site certificate issuance, the certificate holder received Council approval of five site certificate amendments. The Council's *Final Order on Amendment 4* authorized construction and operation of up to 1,189 acres of solar photovoltaic energy generation components; and, *Final Order on Amendment 5* authorized allocation of previously approved facility components into an amended and two original site certificates for the Montague Wind Power Facility (202 MW wind facility) and new facilities referred to as Montague Solar Facility (162 MW wind facility) and Oregon Trail Solar Facility (41 MW wind and/or solar combination facility). The Montague Solar Facility is under construction; Oregon Trail Solar Facility has not yet initiated preconstruction activities.

## PROPOSED MITIGATION PLAN AMENDMENTS

Under the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Standard (OAR 345-022-0060), Council imposed Condition 91 requiring that, during facility operation, the certificate holder implement a Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (WMMP). One of the WMMP components is a Post-

Construction Fatality Monitoring Program (PCFM), where the objective is to determine whether wind turbine operation results in significant fatality of bird and bat species. The WMMP PCFM establishes protocol for removal trials, searcher efficiency trials, fatality searches, and the statistical analysis of an ODFW-approved model (“Shoenfeld Estimator”). The protocols and statistical analysis represent current standard practice for EFSC-wind facilities.

The certificate holder requests approval to amend the WMMP PCFM protocols and statistical analysis to reflect updates in industry standards and practices. In summary, the changes to the PCFM would result in the following:

- Remove reference to bird handling
- Increase search frequency
- Modify consecutive survey years from Year 1 and Year 5, to Years 1 and 2
- Add option to use road and pad survey plots
- Updating the fatality estimator from Shoenfeld to the United States Geological Survey’s Generalized Mortality Estimator (GenEst) tool.

The proposed changes are substantively the same as the changes reviewed by the Department, in consultation with ODFW Regional Biologist Steve Cherry and Energy Coordinator Sarah Reif, for the Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facilities I and II, as approved by Council in October 2020. In particular, ODFW and the Department previously reviewed proposed changes in PCFM search interval and search plot size and location; and use of the GenEst tool.

The Department, ODFW, certificate holder and certificate holder’s wildlife biologist from West-Inc conducted a conference call on March 9, 2021 to discuss the details of the proposed changes, as presented in red-line in Attachment 1. Based on review and consultation with ODFW, the Department recommends Council approve the WMMP amendment for Montague Wind Power Facility and determine that the proposed amendments represent improvements in data collection and analytical evaluation of potential fatality impacts from wind turbine operation to bird and bat species. The Department has requested written concurrence from ODFW, to be further discussed at the April 23, 2021 Council meeting.

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan