Office of Representative Anna Scharf

HB 2702

Ensuring Longevity for Oregon's Renewable Energy Facilities

Background

In the last few decades, Oregon has gradually increased the production of renewable energy thanks to growing consumer demand, decreasing costs, and a number of clean energy programs. Many of these renewable energy projects require state and federal financial incentives to remain cost competitive with non-renewable energy sources. Sadly, many of these renewable energy incentive programs prioritize new projects over the maintenance and longevity of existing facilities.

In some cases, the structure of these programs leads project managers to forego much needed maintenance on aged facilities and instead pursue new and more lucrative projects. The failure to properly maintain these renewable energy facilities creates public and environmental safety hazards, decreases renewable energy production, and leaves Oregon ratepayers to foot the bill. As Oregon progresses toward clean and renewable energy, we must ensure that our efforts support long-term renewable energy production, not short-term profitability.

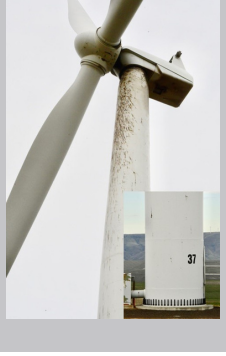
Biglow Canyon Wind Farm

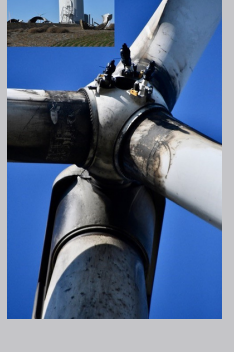
The Biglow Canyon Wind Farm, PGE's flagship wind farm, has been a source of frustration for the local farmers who lease their land to the facility for over a decade of its 15-year existence. The wind farm has been plagued by oil leakages, falling metal discs and bolts, and transformer ruptures, all while underdelivering on energy production and consistently underreporting public safety incidents.

Biglow Canyon has had three times more reported incidents than any other state regulated wind farm

Turbines at Biglow Canyon regularly leak oil and lubricants, coating towers and the surrounding land.

Several transformers have ruptured causing two fires and spilling roughly 3,000 gallons of flammable mineral oil into the soil requiring costly cleanups.





In February 2022, a 6.5 ton turbine blade broke off, flying over 100 yards

This incident led PGE to shut down all 217 turbines for testing, keeping some out of service for more than four months.

PGE had been knowingly operating at least four turbines at Biglow Canyon with broken blade bolts, in one case for over a year.



PGE has failed to report public safety incidents at Biglow Canyon, including bolts, metal disks, and hatches falling 265 feet

PGE has challenged whether such incidents are reportable to the Department of Energy. DOE made clear that it is reportable, noting that falling bolts from that height can reach 90 mph.

Biglow Canyon has also underperformed its energy generation expectations:

- In 2008, PGE told the Oregon Public Utilities Commission they expected to generate energy at 37% capacity on average – Biglow Canyon has never hit 37% capacity.
  - In the first five years the project averaged 31% capacity.
  - Since 2010, when the project was fully completed it has averaged just 27.6% capacity.
- For comparison, the neighboring and similarly aged Patu and Klondike III Wind Farms have averaged 36% and 29.2% capacity respectively.

As the Biglow Canyon Wind Farm is over 10 years old, it no longer receives federal subsidies for clean energy production. This has led PGE to consistently reduce operation and maintenance spending. In 2022 PGE spent just $13 million, 40% less than 2013 spending and the lowest amount since 2010. PGE is expected to spend even less in 2023 with reports showing just $10 million going toward Biglow Canyon.

Purpose of HB 2702

We propose that renewable energy projects be required to adopt and enact a plan for maintaining their intended sustained output of energy for a period of no less than 25 years as a condition of receiving state financial incentives for renewable energy facilities.

Investigative Report

Wind Bust

Sickinger, Ted. **The Oregonian**. OregonLive. 27 August 2022.
https://projects.oregonlive.com/wind-farms/