

H. Sensitive Parks

1. Kane Weston Email- Wind Code Setback Section D

Megan Zumbuhl

From: Denis Tracy
Sent: Tuesday, December 16, 2025 10:07 AM
To: Megan Zumbuhl
Subject: FW: Wind code Setback Section D
Attachments: planning commision wind code motion with reasons.docx

From: Alan Thomson <Alan.Thomson@whitmancounty.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 10:08 AM
To: Bill Meyers <myers@stjohncable.com>; Brian Davies <bdavies.cvs@gmail.com>; Chris Melhus <chrismelhus@aol.com>; gibney <gibney@pullman.com>; Dave McKeirnan <dmckeirnan@yahoo.com>; Dean Kinzer <kinzerdd@gmail.com>; Julian Matthews <protectingnimiipuu@gmail.com>; Tami Southern <tamisouthern1@gmail.com>; Weston Kane <weston_kane@hotmail.com>
Cc: Mark Storey <Mark.Storey@whitmancounty.gov>; Denis Tracy <DenisT@whitmancounty.gov>; Grace Di Biase <Grace.DiBiase@whitmancounty.gov>
Subject: FW: Wind code Setback Section D

FYI.

Alan.

From: Weston Kane <weston_kane@hotmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2025 6:27 AM
To: Alan Thomson <Alan.Thomson@whitmancounty.gov>
Subject: Wind code Setback Section D

Caution! This message was sent from outside your organization.

[Allow sender](#) | [Block sender](#) | [Report](#)

I've attached the list of sources used when I wrote this section for the last meeting. Will this work for findings of fact?

Thanks,

Weston

D. Wind Energy Facility Setback from Protected Lands

Wind energy facilities shall be prohibited within 1(n) mile of lands designated as areas of national, state, or local significance. For the purposes of this section, *areas of national, state, or local significance* include, but are not limited to:

1. All state parks, including Palouse to Cascades Trail:
2. All county parks, including Klemgaard, Bill Chipman Trail, Wawawai County Park:
3. Public access sites and recreational lands owned or managed by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW), including Rock Lake, Pampa Pond, and Revere
4. Public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM),

This setback applies to the footprint of the wind energy facility, including turbines, associated infrastructure, and temporary construction areas.

Purpose Statements (Whitman County, WA) — With Sources

1. Protect Public Health and Safety
 - Wind turbine operations (e.g., noise, shadow flicker, risk of blade or ice throw) can affect people using or visiting nearby public lands. Setbacks reduce these risks for users of county parks, WDFW access sites, and similar areas.
 - *Source:* WDFW recommends early engagement and site planning to “avoid and minimize impacts to biological resources ... while planning, permitting, operating ... and decommissioning” projects. [WDFW+1](#)
 - *Source:* Numerical models show how noise propagation from turbines is influenced by terrain, which supports the use of buffers. [arXiv](#)
2. Preserve Wildlife Habitat and Ecological Integrity
 - Whitman County includes shrub-steppe and sagebrush ecosystems that support sensitive wildlife (e.g., sagebrush-associated species). Setbacks help limit fragmentation, disturbance, and cumulative impacts.

- *Source:* WDFW’s “Guidelines for Utility-Scale Solar and Onshore Wind” explicitly call for spatiotemporal buffers around sensitive species and habitat. [WDFW](#)
- *Source:* The Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment by WDFW documents how habitat fragmentation (e.g., from development) threatens sage-grouse populations. [WDFW](#)
- *Source:* Wind-energy development on public lands can cause indirect effects such as altered predator communities and reduced reproductive success in sagebrush-obligate species. [EFSEC](#)

3. Protect Scenic, Recreational, and Cultural Values of Public Lands

- Public lands in Whitman County (state parks, county parks, WDFW lands) are valued for their natural, recreational and cultural character. Setbacks help maintain visual quality and prevent wind-facility encroachment on these important landscapes.
- *Source:* Local coverage has noted concern in Washington over wind development encroaching on shrub-steppe habitat — valued for both wildlife and recreation. [National Wind Watch](#)
- *Source:* WDFW’s guidelines emphasize maintaining the ecological and habitat function of sensitive lands during permitting. [WDFW](#)

4. Ensure Compatible Land Use

- By establishing clear buffers between development and key public lands, Whitman County can balance land-use goals: supporting renewable energy while preserving conservation, recreation, and wildlife use of public lands.
- *Source:* NREL’s research shows that setback ordinances provide structure and predictability, helping integrate clean energy infrastructure into communities and natural environments. [NREL](#)
- *Source:* WDFW guidelines recommend collaborative planning and early consultation to align wind siting with land-use priorities. [WDFW+1](#)

5. Support Long-Term Stewardship and Reduce Liability

- Setbacks provide space for access, maintenance, and decommissioning, which reduces risks related to restoring sites in or near public lands.

- *Source:* WDFW’s guidelines include mitigation, decommissioning, and restoration strategies to minimize long-term ecological footprints. [WDFW](#)
- *Source:* Landscape-level assessments emphasize that indirect and cumulative effects (e.g., predation, habitat change) can be managed through thoughtful spatial planning. [EFSEC+1](#)

6. Promote Responsible Renewable Energy Development

- Whitman County supports clean energy but also has a responsibility to conserve its natural landscapes. Setbacks enable a balance between renewable energy deployment and conservation of critical ecological and recreational lands.
- *Source:* WDFW explicitly supports renewable energy development, as long as impacts to wildlife and habitat are avoided or minimized, per its current guidelines. [WDFW](#)
- *Source:* Research on renewable energy planning shows land-use conflicts are real; setback ordinances are one way to manage them while still advancing decarbonization goals. [arXiv](#)

7. Safeguard Sagebrush-Steppe as a Priority Habitat

- Many public lands in Whitman County include or are adjacent to sagebrush-steppe, which is a priority habitat for conservation. Protecting these areas from turbine encroachment is essential for species that rely on large, contiguous shrub-steppe.
- *Source:* The National Fish & Wildlife Foundation operates a mitigation program for sagebrush shrub-steppe in Washington, recognizing its conservation importance. [NFWF](#)
- *Source:* The Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment emphasizes the need for large, unfragmented sagebrush areas for species persistence. [WDFW](#)

Works Cited

California Governor’s Office of Business and Economic Development. (2023). *Draft Wind Model Ordinance Guide*. <https://business.ca.gov>

Groundwork Center. (n.d.). *Wind Initiative: Frequently Asked Questions*.
<https://groundworkcenter.org>

National Fish & Wildlife Foundation. (n.d.). *Sagebrush Shrub-Steppe Mitigation Program*.
<https://www.nfwf.org>

National Renewable Energy Laboratory. (2023). *Analysis Quantifies Impacts of Setback Ordinances on Land Available for Renewable Energy Development*. <https://www.nrel.gov>

National Research Council. (2007). *Environmental Impacts of Wind-Energy Projects*.
National Academies Press.

Washington State Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council (EFSEC). (2025). *Exhibit 3002R: Wildlife and Habitat Assessment*.

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. (2020). *Guidelines for Utility-Scale Solar and Onshore Wind Energy Projects in Washington*. <https://wdfw.wa.gov>

Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife. (2011). *Greater Sage-Grouse Conservation Assessment and Strategy*. <https://wdfw.wa.gov>

Wind-Works. (n.d.). *Public Safety and Setbacks*. <https://wind-works.org>

Wind Exchange (U.S. Department of Energy). (2016). *Wind Energy Ordinances and Planning Guidance*. <https://windexchange.energy.gov>

Wind Watch. (2022). *Washington Wind Farms May Conflict with Habitat Preservation Projects*. <https://www.wind-watch.org>

ArXiv. (2022–2023). Various studies on wind turbine impacts, noise propagation, and renewable energy land-use conflicts. <https://arxiv.org>