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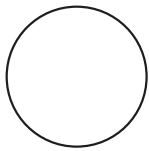
BUSINESS

Oregon clean energy group sues Defense Department over wind project freeze

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An apparent halt in federal wind project reviews could impact reliability in the Northwest, where growth in electricity demand has power planners concerned about potential energy shortages. Jamie Francis/The Oregonian



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Oregon clean energy group sues Defense Department over wind project freeze

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By [Griffin Uribe Brown](#) | [The Oregonian/OregonLive](#)

Portland-based Renewable Northwest and other clean energy groups from around the country filed a lawsuit against the United States Department of Defense for what they claim is “an unprecedented campaign against wind energy.”

The lawsuit, filed on May 31 in U.S. District Court in Oregon, says the Pentagon is exploiting a routine process to enact an anti-wind energy political agenda by refusing to approve wind projects. Since Donald Trump’s return to the presidency, the government has treated wind energy “like an adversary rather than a regulated industry,” it alleges.

Renewable Northwest said the department’s halt on approvals for new wind energy projects is affecting over 100 land-based wind projects across 21 states, putting 30 gigawatts and \$50 billion in investment at risk nationwide. Numerous projects by member companies are currently on hold, including at least six projects in Oregon.



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The Department of Defense, which now calls itself the Department of War, said it cannot comment on ongoing litigation, but a department official told The Oregonian/OregonLive the approval process is “inherently complex and time-consuming.”

The complaint named Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth and Dale Marks, the assistant secretary of defense for energy, installations and environment, alongside the department and Military Aviation and Installation Assurance Siting Clearinghouse, which evaluates energy projects. Court filings show the plaintiffs unsuccessfully attempted to resolve the dispute with representatives for the Department of Defense on June 10, and after filed a motion for preliminary relief.

The apparent halt in federal reviews raises reliability concerns in the Northwest, where growth in electricity demand from data centers has power planners concerned about potential energy shortages. If sustained, it could also jeopardize Oregon utilities ability to meet aggressive state mandates to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases — initially by 80% by 2030.

Both Portland General Electric and PacifiCorp have been slow to achieve progress toward the 2030 target and their plans to meet the mandates are heavily backloaded, including massive amounts of new renewable resources slated to come on line just before the 2030 deadline.

PGE, for instance, is planning on adding nearly 1,400 megawatts of new wind power in 2029, and PacifiCorp's plan calls for it to add 1,800 megawatts of new wind power by 2030. Permitting and construction of wind farms involve long lead times.

Omar Granados, communication specialist at PacifiCorp, said the company cannot speak toward project-specific challenges affecting third parties. PacifiCorp has brought online or contracted over 1.14 gigawatts of wind, solar and storage resources allocated to Oregon since 2021, he added. PGE did not respond to a request for comment.

Since he was appointed to head the military, Hegseth has bashed "climate change crap" and dismissed renewable energy initiatives. The president, too, has regularly voiced his intense aversion to windmills, which dates back to prolonged and unsuccessful court fights he waged in Scotland to block offshore windfarms now visible from his golf courses near Aberdeen and Turnberry.

"My goal is to not let any windmill be built. They're losers," he said at a January White House meeting with oil executives.

Because of height, utility-scale wind energy projects must notify the Federal Aviation Administration of proposals. Defense Department policy outlines that the department must first review activities that involve national security or operational interests. When issues do arise, the military negotiates mitigation agreements with developers.

Plaintiffs claim the Department of Defense stopped fulfilling this obligation to assess wind projects through the FAA. In doing so, the lawsuit says the Pentagon has caused a "total halt of all wind development" in the U.S. without justification.

In May, the American Clean Power Association said that the Department of Defense was stalling 165 onshore wind projects, some of which were waiting for a final signoff. The group said the delays have worsened in recent weeks.

“Historically, negotiated mitigation agreements were executed within a substantially shorter time frame, consistent with the timelines contemplated in the statute and agency guidance,” the group wrote in a March 9 letter to the Defense Department published by The New York Times.

The lawsuit states federal actions “have universally lacked substantive bases in law or fact,” citing instances of federal courts dismissing government pauses on wind energy authorizations. Some efforts by the Trump administration to stop wind projects have been struck down by lower courts.

As it allegedly blocks wind projects, the lawsuit points out the government has “paradoxically” expressed desire to expand U.S. energy production.

In the Northwest, infrastructure like wind is key to reaching energy and decarbonization goals, according to Spencer Gray, executive director of Northwest & Intermountain Power Producers Coalition.

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“Wind is absolutely necessary,” he said, adding that roadblocks to building out the region’s wind production existed before current Trump administration policies. Oregon and Washington’s limited transmission and interconnection capacity,

coupled with slow permitting in both states, has put the Northwest “behind the curve” in energy projects, he said.

Last year, wind energy accounted for about 11% of the country’s utility-scale electricity generation. Wind energy made up about 13% of PGE’s resource mix in 2025 and about 15% of PacifiCorp’s energy mix in Oregon in 2024, according to the companies.

“The dramatic irreparable harm to the wind energy industry in turn has significant negative impacts on consumers, state governments, and the U.S. economy,” the lawsuit says. “It increases electricity prices at a time when Americans are already struggling with affordability.”

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