



Antelope Ridge Energy Position

Oregon Rural Action

Since its beginnings as a membership-based community organization Oregon Rural Action has been advocating and promoting the use of energy conservation, efficiency and renewable energy production in order to reduce carbon emissions, decrease dependence on fossil fuels, increase energy independence, and support local economies. Meanwhile, over the last decade, the generous tax incentive systems originally put in place to drive the creation of a green energy economy has resulted in the spread of large-scale renewable energy development throughout the Northwest and the nation. As might be expected with this type of development and the way in which it has proceeded, a strong backlash has also ensued – particularly against wind power. Where the impacts of our collective energy appetites are made apparent in the form of new energy production systems, local community members are raising the question of whether this kind of development is something they really want.

In 2010 a proposed second wind farm in Union County, the Antelope Ridge Wind Farm, became highly contentious. Both pro- and anti-wind farm groups formed in reaction to the wind farm proposal, and a great deal of conflict and division among neighbors and friends has arisen over the issue. Similarly, the membership of Oregon Rural Action also appeared divided. Several ORA members were involved in the founding of both the local anti- and pro-wind groups. In light of this, the Oregon Rural Action board voted in August 2010 to take a neutral position on the Antelope Ridge Wind Farm and to continue to work on solutions to our energy issues that build and connect our community rather than dividing it.

Since that board decision, Union County brought an advisory vote before its voters in November 2010 asking citizens, “Do the citizens of Union County support the Antelope Ridge Wind Farm application currently before the Department of Energy?” The result - 52% opposed, 48% in favor - shows the citizens of the county are, in fact, divided down the middle. Although the advisory vote showed a majority of residents oppose the project, because of the complexities of the energy industry, how it is regulated, and the way that energy-related decisions are made, the wind towers will still likely be erected and the community could remain divided.

If anything, these events show the need for a deeper conversation across all of our communities about energy: its sources, its production, its location, its service areas, its

Energy Policy Position

On October 13, 2001, at the annual meeting of the members of Oregon Rural Action, the members duly adopted the following resolution on energy policy.

The membership of Oregon Rural Action believes that a safe and sound energy policy should:

1. Reduce U.S. dependence on domestic and foreign fossil fuels and nuclear energy, and place more emphasis on renewable energy development and public transportation.
2. Give priority to those energy options with the lowest total economic, environmental, and social costs.
3. Emphasize energy conservation as the cleanest, safest, and most effective way to address short-term (immediate) and long-term energy needs.
4. Encourage energy independence through environmentally responsible applications of wind, solar, geothermal and other

consumption, and its impacts. None of us can claim not to play some role in the energy system.

So where do we go from here? Since its inception, Oregon Rural Action has organized and brought people together to build strong communities and promote social justice, agricultural and economic sustainability, and stewardship of the region's land, air and water. In keeping with this mission, the membership of ORA approved an Energy Policy Position in 2001 (see side bar) emphasizing energy conservation, efficiency and developing renewable energy in a way with the least economic, environmental and social costs.

Similarly, we must organize and bring our whole community and region together to create local and regional energy policies that guide our future. This will allow us to define what we are in favor of rather than just what we oppose. It will allow us as a community to responsibly define and create the energy future we seek with local input and control that protects our environment, economy, and society, and leaves these things better for our children.

While many of us remain divided on some energy issues, there are many more solutions on which we can come together to create a better future. Energy efficiency, energy conservation and home energy production are just a few solutions with high importance and much less controversy. The challenge of our time is committing to work together to face these complicated issues and address them as a whole community. If you're ready to be a part of such an effort, contact or join Oregon Rural Action today.

Adopted by the Board of Directors November 20, 2010

renewable energy technologies, and ensure that new energy technologies do not create new problems in the process of solving others.

5. Protect people, their health, and the environment, especially water, soil, and air.
6. Be socially responsible, sharing the costs and benefits of energy programs and policies equitably among rural and urban areas, and with protections for the poor, elderly, and children.
7. Recognize that local and national energy production and distribution systems are public resources, and that citizens must have the power and opportunity to shape energy decisions that affect their lives.
8. Create new and redesign existing human environments to be as energy efficient as possible through the use of information dissemination and incentives.
9. Analyze the true cost of development and the environmental impacts of large subsidized energy projects.
10. Emphasize programs that reduce demand for energy without curtailing vital services.
11. Recognize that a decentralized power industry will give consumers greater voice and local independent control.
12. Support regulatory and legislative measures that address global warming and minimize the use and consumption of fossil fuels.