

Sustainability & Climate Change Reporter

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NIMBYs & Wind Farms in the Pacific Northwest

A new [poll](#) of Pacific Northwest residents shows very strong support for wind energy, which is not so surprising given the large number of wind projects here. But what is significant is the high level of support for wind farms among rural residents, who bear the greatest impacts. The poll of 1200 Oregon, Washington and Idaho residents shows nearly 80 percent of rural respondents would support a wind farm (10 to 20-story high turbines and 200-foot long blades) being built within sight of their homes, while 14 percent would oppose and seven percent don't know.

The poll was conducted for the Northwest Health Foundation, public radio stations in the Northwest and the polling firm of Davis, Hibbitts and Midghall. While the poll also reported that 87 percent of urban residents would support a wind farm, it's the 8 in 10 rural respondents that really count since utility-scale wind projects are located in rural areas.

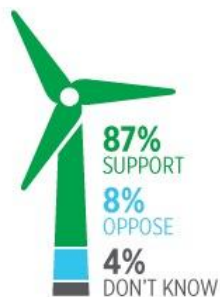
WIND POWER

Wind power energy comes from turbines, which can be as tall as a 10 to 20-story building with 200 foot long blades. Would you **support** or **oppose** wind farms being erected within sight of your home?

RURAL RESPONSE



URBAN RESPONSE



1,200 people polled in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

The high positive responses may be one reason why Oregon and Washington have achieved the fourth and fifth place rankings in existing wind power capacity (behind Texas, Iowa and California), according to the American Wind Energy Association's U.S. Wind Projects [Database](#).

But even with strong support, some Pacific Northwest wind projects encounter opposition. For example, last November, voters in Union County, Oregon, narrowly [defeated](#) a resolution in support of the proposed Antelope Ridge wind farm. The measure was non-binding and, at the end of December, the Oregon Energy Facility Site Evaluation Council deemed the project application [complete](#) and ready for public comment. The first information meeting is scheduled for January 25 and its unlikely that the comments at the meeting will come anywhere close to the 80 percent support for wind power identified in the poll.

In 2008 it took a Washington Supreme Court [decision](#) to overcome objections by some Kittitas County residents about visual impacts and setbacks for a large wind farm near Cle Elum, Washington. Notwithstanding the decision, the Kittitas Valley Wind Power Project has not started construction and the developer has requested an [amendment](#) to the site certification to reduce the number of turbines from 65 to 52.

There are substantially fewer wind projects under construction in Oregon, Washington and Idaho, but that may be due more to the recession, tight credit markets and access to transmission lines than to public opposition. But for wind project proponents the poll results are an encouraging indication that there may be a strong "silent majority" in support of wind farms.

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