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# LandWatch

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## Wind Power: Panacea or Plague?



**W**ind power provides an attractive alternative to our debilitating dependence on fossil fuels. It offers green energy, green jobs and green bucks. What's not to like?

Well, for starters, the scale. Wind plants typically contain hundreds of 150- to 450-foot towers capped by rotors with blades spanning 100 feet or more. East of The Dalles on both the Oregon and Washington sides of the Columbia River, these white monoliths dominate the landscape for miles. Following the still-visible tracks of covered wagons on the Oregon Trail may lead the modern traveler into a community of these most recent settlers.

From a vantage point on Gordon Ridge near The Dalles, one is surrounded by thousands of acres of fields of winter wheat — and wind turbines. The turbines appear like sentinels in the foreground of Mt. Adams, and at night they flash in unison: a vast winking red light district.

These new Oregonians require phalanxes of transmission towers and lines — and the roads to serve them. Scarcely a vista in The Dalles area along the gorge and in the surrounding hillsides is free of them. And they're looking for new places to settle.

Additional plants are planned or underway on the Columbia plateau in Morrow, Sherman, Gilliam, Wasco and Umatilla counties. The Shepherd's Flat facility, five miles east of Arlington, will likely be the largest in the world. According to one Website, its 30 square miles will contain 90 miles of powerlines, 85 miles of roads and 338 turbines generating 2 billion kilowatts per year, enough to power 235,000 homes — homes mostly west of the Cascades in Oregon, or in Washington and California.

Oregon appears, at least, to be well on the way to obtaining 25 percent of its electrical energy from renewables by 2025. The governor is happy, conscientious consumers are happy, and certainly local ranchers are happy to pocket on average \$1,500 to \$2,000 per turbine in royalties.

It's interesting to consider, though, how these massive new arrivals may already be affecting our sense of the Columbia landscape, and our image of the state as a unique whole. Passing through the Gorge used to bring a transition from the steep, conifer-covered cliff-sides in the moist west to the naked isolation of dry, treeless, rolling plateau in the east.

New towers as tall as redwoods have imposed alien verticality on a formerly horizontal eastern landscape. Now one can scarcely imagine the Columbia plateau without its turbines.

Of course, that's exactly what promoters like the American Wind Energy Association want your mind's eye to see. To those who submit that the thousands of towers, transmission lines and roads defile their sense of place, AWEA contends that "the use of turbines of the same size, spaced uniformly, generally results in a wind plant that satisfies most aesthetic concerns"; indeed, that "others see them as elegant and beautiful, or symbols of a better, less polluted future."

There are those, however, who may not have aesthetic concerns but have complained about the noise from rotors and blades and have experienced headaches, dizziness, and memory loss — symptoms of what New York physician Nina Pierpont has diagnosed as "wind turbine syndrome".

*continued on page 2*



*Wind Power, continued from page 1*

As to the effects on wildlife: AWEA claims that bird and bat kills have been “reduced” by improved technology but admits that “more research is needed” to determine possible impacts from habitat fragmentation. There’s no indication that such research is underway.

But what of the effect on the wind itself? Could thousands of mills, turning this way and that, be altering wind patterns and thereby, in time, altering land forms and skewing temperature and climate? Are these giants stealing the wind and then fencing it to a faceless grid?

Who knows? Who cares? Probably not those banking on salvation by a “free” energy source offering a “better, less polluted future.”

As out-of-state companies monopolize the Gorge, still others are looking for windfalls further south. On Steens Mountain in Harney County, for instance, where for a century and a half far-ranging livestock have fouled the soil and water, soon giant turbines and transmission towers promise to desecrate the viewshed of the Loop Road and Kiger Gorge — and enrich the royalty rancher.

Appealing to the governor and the local economy with green energy and jobs and satisfying a consumer base on the western side of the Cascades and in California with greenwashing, the absentee neo-cowboy and his stationary stock count on little opposition in a dry land with infrequent visitors and scarce inhabitants.

As clean energy spreads into the remotest regions — into desert, gorge and ocean — it masks and enables the dirty business of overpopulation and overconsumption. When will it occur to “green” Oregonians that avoiding root causes requires a willingness to strike a Faustian bargain and cast their souls to the wind?

**Robert Emmons, President**  
LandWatch Lane County



*Johnson Farms land considered for inclusion in Springfield's UGB expansion plans*

## Flawed Assumptions and Data Support Springfield Urban Growth Boundary Expansion

With its proposed Springfield 2030 Refinement Plan, the City of Springfield has undertaken an ambitious long-range planning project. However, the proposal contains questionable assumptions and policy choices that, if implemented, could hurt Springfield's economy, affordability and livability for years to come.

Springfield proposes to add 640 acres of commercial and industrial land to the UGB, despite already having sufficient acreage to meet 20-year employment projections. This is justified by a claim that existing sites are not big enough to attract industries that require large, flat sites, such as warehousing and distribution. However, the analysis claims a need for such sites that is much greater than is warranted based on historic development patterns, both for every specific site size and in aggregate. The study also assumes site sizes that far exceed the requirements listed for such businesses elsewhere in the study. In addition, the analysis fails to

consider the possibility of assembling smaller sites into larger holdings, as was done for the PeaceHealth project, and improperly ignores the redevelopment potential of sites such as the Weyerhaeuser paper factory.

Of the 640 acres Springfield proposes to bring into the UGB, 500 acres are for industrial uses on sites over 20 acres in size. The study states that 375 jobs are expected on these 500 acres, for a job density of less than one job per acre, by far the worst proposed job density in the study. Every type of new job growth on every parcel size under 20 acres produces superior job densities, with the general rule that the smaller the parcel, the more efficient the job creation. For example, 1,024 new office jobs are expected to need 100 sites with an average size of .3 acres per site, for a job density of 34 jobs per acre.

There are questions that must be asked and answered. Why should we waste nearly 500 acres of prime development land to site a paltry 375 jobs, when that same number could be had on just 11 acres of scattered infill sites? Is it really in our best interests to pave over irreplaceable prime farmlands so that a few more fork truck drivers can roam

the lonely stacks in a few more new warehouses? How will today's choices affect our options down the road?

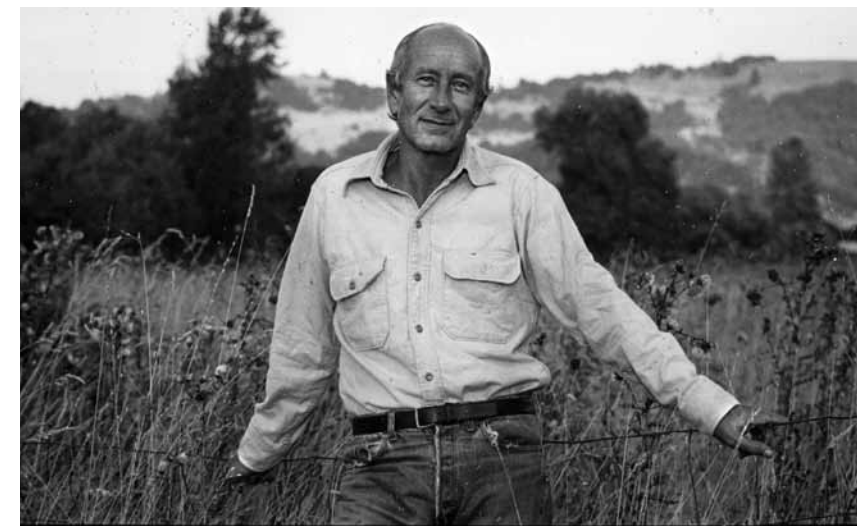
Springfield's economic future depends on wise use of the limited land it has left. City consultants have found that less than 2000 acres of additional developable land exist in the Springfield area; there should be no illusions about the dearth of additional land once these reserves are gone. Springfield's future growth will be severely constrained by limitations imposed by the natural world: Eugene to the west, and mountains, rivers and wetlands in the other three directions.

It should be a priority of county and city leaders to ensure that from here on out, what little land that remains is wisely used. Springfield no longer has the luxury to be inefficient with its growth, if it wants to build a thriving and sustainable local economy. Recognizing and working with natural limits, instead of ignoring them, will produce the best results.

If these low job densities are pursued, Springfield will have given away much of the last of its good developable land while receiving very little in return in the way of job growth. This will hurt Springfield's economy in the long run. In the shorter term, a large supply of new urbanizable land will undercut Springfield's efforts to revitalize and redevelop the downtown, Glenwood and East Main Street, and will also increase infrastructure costs, commute times and transportation costs.

LandWatch Lane County has been an active participant in this process, and will continue to press for needed changes to the Springfield 2030 Refinement Plan. In coming months, there will be opportunities for the public to participate in hearings before the Lane County Board of Commissioners and the Springfield City Council.

**Mia Nelson**



*Jim Weaver*

## Reminiscences and Ruminations from Former Congressman Jim Weaver

I was born in a small town in South Dakota, grandson of Norwegian immigrants. Near the end of WWII I served on an aircraft carrier in the South Pacific. My parents moved from Iowa to Oregon in 1946, and after I was discharged from the Navy I joined them.

Eugene was a small university town then. Eighteenth Avenue was a gravel road, and Eugene High School, as it was called then, was on the outskirts of town. I married a woman who grew up in Eugene, and we lived in the east hills above the college campus on narrow streets called Spring Boulevard and Floral Hill. Our three daughters all went to the same schools: Edison, Roosevelt and Eugene High School.

In those days Eugene Water and Electric Board was controlled by conservative Republicans, such as Earl McNutt,

who wanted to keep Eugene small and stable. Decades before Oregon's land use program, they forbade water hookups outside the city limits and made it difficult for new industry to locate here. The citizenry liked it that way. Crime was almost nonexistent; there was no congestion and little air pollution; and the restaurants and stores were owned and run by local people. Fruit and vegetable farms flourished. Excursions up the McKenzie River, to the Three Sisters, and to the ocean beaches were common pleasures. Closer to home, the university offered a multitude of lectures, exhibits and dramas — I was Willy Loman's neighbor, Charley, in *Death of a Salesman*.

I wouldn't trade any of that for today. Yet, when I became a real estate developer and a builder, I was as guilty as anyone for the surge in population and development. Among other ventures, I bought land on Seavey Loop and built housing on it. I was about to build much more — this was 1970 — but when I applied for permits I was told by county officials that Oregon's new land use laws would not allow such development on the lush



*Jim Weaver, continued from page 3*

farmland surrounding Eugene. Even though I loved the little community my town once was, I nevertheless intended to build it into something bigger. Fortunately, our land use protections prevented that.

By the time I went into politics as a Democrat, ran for Congress, and eventually won the 4th Congressional seat in 1974, I was chastened. As a Congressman I declined to help the heedless overrunning of the land we once cherished by bringing in new industries that only stoked the fires of congestion, crime, pollution and instability. Any Envision Eugene, Springfield 2030 Plan, Big Look, or call it what you will, should first ask if citizens want or need more of these problems. Or, rather, should we tighten land use laws, forbid new water hookups, and refuse to expand urban growth boundaries?

At a critical time, when the destructive consequences of increasing population

and unbridled development were evident in our poisoned rivers, fouled air and disappearing farmland, we were fortunate to have as governor Tom McCall, and a handful of enlightened other Republicans, to just say no. Now we need a new generation of leaders who will stand up to the misguided assumption that bigger is better. We should cultivate a smaller population instead of taking mindless pride in “growth.” Growth of the sort driven by most politicians, administrators and planners is the growth of the cancer cell. There’s a cure for that kind of cancer: tough, uncompromising land use regulation.

Humans have cut down almost every forest on the planet. As an Oregon congressman, I vowed to make an exception of the great forests of the Northwest. I did what I could: two million acres of Oregon national forests in statutory wilderness, including the 50,000 acres of the French Pete Creek watershed, the only forested part of the Three Sisters

Wilderness. For that I was hanged and burned in effigy, shot at, and threatened with drowning in the Rogue River. Yet the people of southwest Oregon elected me six times.

It’s essential to do what’s right, not what’s popular. If it’s popular as well, so much the better.

After peaked fossil fuels deflate the profligate world economy, local growers and entrepreneurs will be the producers of our sustenance and livelihood. To properly prepare for that new paradigm we ought to work within existing urban growth boundaries to refresh our towns, to preserve our farm and forest land and natural places and, not least, to make education our most important industry. There will be the jobs for a healthy Lane County.

**Jim Weaver**

*Former 4th District Congressman  
United States House of Representatives*



*Eugene Hotel c. 1948*



## Cottage Grove Expansion Facing South

Cottage Grove’s Urban Growth Boundary, the invisible line that surrounds every community in Oregon with a population of over 2,000, is currently in the process of being redrawn. A 2005 Buildable Lands Analysis determined that Cottage Grove has plenty of residential land within the current UGB, but suggested the town is lacking in commercial land acreage. While Cottage Grove has plenty of empty parcels zoned for commercial use within the current UGB, there are no tracts of land suitable for large-scale employment of 100 or more employees.

To that end, a 2009 Economic Opportunities Analysis (EOA) conducted by Econorthwest, with input from a citizen advisory committee, further analyzed the need for commercial/industrial land and determined that Cottage Grove is 170 acres short.

More specifically, the EOA concluded that Cottage Grove has need of a 24 acre industrial site to host a single employer of at least 100 employees and a 33 acre Master- Planned Industrial Park. It also found an unmet need for a community shopping center of approximately 12 acres and a 33 acre business park for commercial service employers, such as health care and social assistance, and supportive services like health clubs and restaurants.

One citizen advisory member believes that the UGB expansion effort must go hand in hand with aggressive recruiting of the types of businesses specified in the EOA. Otherwise there is a risk of duplicating existing businesses.

Furthermore, parcels set aside may be too small for the types of industry Cottage Grove desires. Without the ability to restrict the types of businesses that use the newly designated industrial land, Cottage Grove may attract businesses with little stability, such as call centers and other support services that often promise to employ large

numbers of workers but don’t stay for the long haul. In addition, there is no guarantee that living wage employment will be generated by this use of land.

Cottage Grove is looking to expand south of town, an area consisting mostly of so-called “rural exception areas” – land that is not zoned for exclusive agricultural or forest use on the county comprehensive plan map. Most of the land is considered “developed and committed” to non-farm or non-forest uses so it is not subject to Goal 3 (Agricultural Lands) or Goal 4 (Forest Lands) guidelines.

The UGB expansion process described in ORS 197.298 and OAR 660-024-00660 sets the priorities for determining which land to include within a UGB. Highest priority is given to the exception areas; next to land zoned “marginal”; third to “lower value resource farm or forest land”; and finally to “high value farm or forest land.”

Public outreach will take place at an open house and information booth at a local community festival July 15th. A third citizen’s advisory meeting is scheduled in August, with Planning Commission hearings scheduled for October and November. City Council approval is scheduled for January 24, 2011, and Lane County Commissioners will hear the application in February or March of 2011.

**Cathy Bellevita**



*Area targeted for Cottage Grove UGB expansion*





Typical traffic on Quaglia Road south of Cottage Grove

## Quarry Owner Appeals County's Health and Safety Conditions

Eighty-four year old Laverne Pitcher still lives near the 20-acre quarry on Quaglia Road south of Cottage Grove she sold to Don Overholser in the 1980s. Pitcher said her husband removed only enough rock to "fix roads on the property here," and she never imagined an operation as large as the buyer is seeking.

The difference between the seller's imagination and the new owner's intent led to a four-year battle with neighbors that resulted in the mid-1990s in a zone change permitting quarry operations. Though neighbors appealed to LUBA three times over several years, no new issues or information were allowed.

In 2007, when Overholser applied for a site review permit for the methods

of operation, Lane County imposed a limit on the type of trucks and their speed, number of trips per day and hours of operation. It allowed blasting no more than three times a year and required the owner to repave Quaglia Road from the quarry to Quaglia's intersection with Mosby Creek Road.

By and large, Overholser's own plans, and his apparent intent to appease the neighbors' concerns about noise, dust, traffic safety, wildlife and wetlands, generated the restrictions. Notwithstanding, through his attorney, Joe Leahy, he has appealed those conditions, averring that, "it doesn't matter to the residents how the quarry is run." Thirty families, who organized in 2008 as "Families For a Quarry-free Neighborhood," begged to differ. Said one resident, "He's screaming that he can't make enough money with these restrictions. We don't care. He already owns half of Lorane."

Overholser says he "went up there with the intention of being a good

neighbor," but "it hasn't gotten me anywhere." He insists that he's "ready to do whatever is necessary to make a profit," and that "things may have to get ugly but nobody's going to get run over one way or the other."

Perhaps not, but for the next twenty-five years quarry neighbors may suffer the consequences of a sleeping giant awakened to spread noise, dust, increased traffic and reduced property values over a formerly tranquil community.

An On-the-Record hearing on Overholser's appeal of the county's health and safety requirements is scheduled for August 5th.

### Louis Melton and Robert Emmons

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## Recognizing and Accepting Limits to Growth

For 14 years LandWatch Lane County has been working with Lane County neighbors to protect farms, forests and natural areas from sprawl and other impacts. These lands are largely outside urban growth boundaries.

When I came to Eugene 45 years ago, a few miles outside the heart of downtown in any direction you were into farm and forest land, into wetlands and open space. Eugene's population was about 54,000. Now it's three times that, and farmlands and forestlands are growing malls and strip-malls, big box stores, sub-divisions, gated communities and estates, all of it dependent upon cheap oil and ready money for infrastructure. Wildlife, as usual, have had to fend for themselves, somewhere out on the ever-receding periphery.

Outside the urban growth boundaries of Eugene and Springfield outlying communities, such as Lowell, Coburg, Veneta, Creswell and much of the lands in between, have swollen with retirees and with people financing their country living with Eugene/Springfield jobs. As a consequence, former resource lands and open space, working farms, ranches and woodlots have become bedroom communities, and the air above them has grown fouler with increased CO2 emissions.

We're in the midst of an environmental and economic crisis, yet by and large it's business as usual. Following a state mandate to provide a 20-year supply of buildable lands based on population projections, Eugene, Springfield, Cottage Grove and Junction City are presently considering expanding their urban growth boundaries. The buildable lands mandate codifies what planners, administrators and most politicians believe in principle: that growth is desirable and can be accommodated, and if not desirable then at least inevitable. But multiple signs—toxic soil,

air and water, depleted water and oil supplies, global warming and stressed and strapped overpopulations, to name a few—have been telling us loudly and clearly for a long time that growth has not been good to us or our environment. Yet growth is not inevitable; it's a matter of choice, a matter of policy. The buildable lands mandate, for instance, was not an edict from God but the political will of decision makers; it can and must be eliminated by a more enlightened lot.

Some believe that growth can be smart. But "smart growth" is an oxymoron, an elaborate shell game requiring a Sophie's Choice. Do we increase the density and destroy the architectural integrity and quality of life in historical neighborhoods, for example, or do we urbanize and suburbanize our rural lands? Failure to recognize limits to growth feeds the same old paradigm that has made poisoned air, water and land a world-wide crisis—even as we continue to produce more of us to administer the doses. Until we get off the growth machine and expand our minds rather than our beltways, we'll continue to chase our tails, digging a bigger hole for ourselves in the pursuit.

Where possible and appropriate we ought to shrink urban growth boundaries or, in lieu of that, create a critical lands overlay zone to protect sensitive resource lands on the urban fringe—land such as that east of River Road near Santa Clara where rich farmland important for local food security is gradually succumbing to subdivisions. There is at least a temporary choice other than a Sophie's: the redevelopment potential within existing urban growth boundaries that would satisfy state requirements, if not The Homebuilders Association, and meet local needs. Glenwood and the east end of Main Street in Springfield come to mind as examples.

The assumptions and data used by Springfield's consultant, Econorthwest – consultant for Eugene and Cottage Grove as well – to support a UGB

expansion have been shown to be faulty. Yet the expansionist mythology is so engrained in the Springfield mindset that it refuses to recognize it has hit the natural barrier of two watersheds, the McKenzie and the Willamette, and has nowhere to expand other than floodplain, floodway, riparian, wetland, steep hillside and/or farm and forest land.

It should be mentioned that rarely in these growth aspirations are the habitat needs of wildlife, or even our own need for unsullied open space, taken into consideration.

Dwindling resources and climate change apparently are still too abstract for most people to accept as prime motivators for social change. They haven't yet hit the wall, and they're not prone to exercise the precautionary principle.

But for those of us who would rather hop out and seek a safer environment than unwittingly succumb, like the proverbial frog, to a slow boil, the sooner we introduce population, peak fossil fuels and global warming concerns into the land use conversation, the sooner we can effect some real deterrents on the ground. To that end Jim Just, my colleague from Goal One Coalition, and I are on a land use task force recently formed by the county commission to consider a series of Jim's proposals that include new policies regarding food security, air quality, and energy conservation.

Oregon's land use program, though woefully weakened by development interests over the 37 years of its existence, has maintained at least a semblance of the state's integrity. But it is an outmoded growth management model overrun by demand.

It appears to me that nothing less than a paradigm shift in the way a majority of us live and work and think will be required to survive the realities of an overpopulated, exhausted and rebellious earth. We can start by holding—and cultivating—ground.

**Robert Emmons**