USDA Forest Service
Malheur, Umatilla, and Wallowa-Whitman National Forests

Briefing Paper: Wind Energy Potential in the Blues
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Robert Gecy

The National Forests are required by the Energy Policy Act of 2005 to address development potential for renewable energy resources, including wind energy. Wind energy, if it occurs on the national forests, would be regulated as a special use following directives contained in Forest Service Handbook FSH 2709.11, Chapter 70.

Based on data available from the National Renewable Energy Laboratory, the total area with potential for wind energy development on NFS lands in the Blue Mountains totals slightly less than 390,000 acres. The Hell's Canyon Recreation Area is not included in the analysis.

The proposed revised forest plan has identified Management Area 4A (General Forest) as potentially *suitable* for wind energy development.

- Acres by forest within MA 4A with sufficient wind energy potential to be commercially viable are (see map on following page):

    - Malheur 39,000 acres
    - Umatilla 168,500 acres
    - Wallowa-Whitman 181,000 acres

Designated wilderness and inventoried roadless areas (IRAs) are legally excluded from wind energy development, so that only the areas with wind power potential outside of these areas are potentially *suitable*.

- Therefore, the areas with wind energy potential where such use would not be legally excluded, and are identified as "*suitable*" in the proposed plan, total approximately 122,500 acres (2.5% of National Forest System lands in the Blue Mountains):

    - Malheur 9,500 acres
    - Umatilla 79,100 acres
    - Wallowa-Whitman 33,200 acres

Identifying these areas does not mean that they are proposed for development, or that development is likely to occur. In addition:

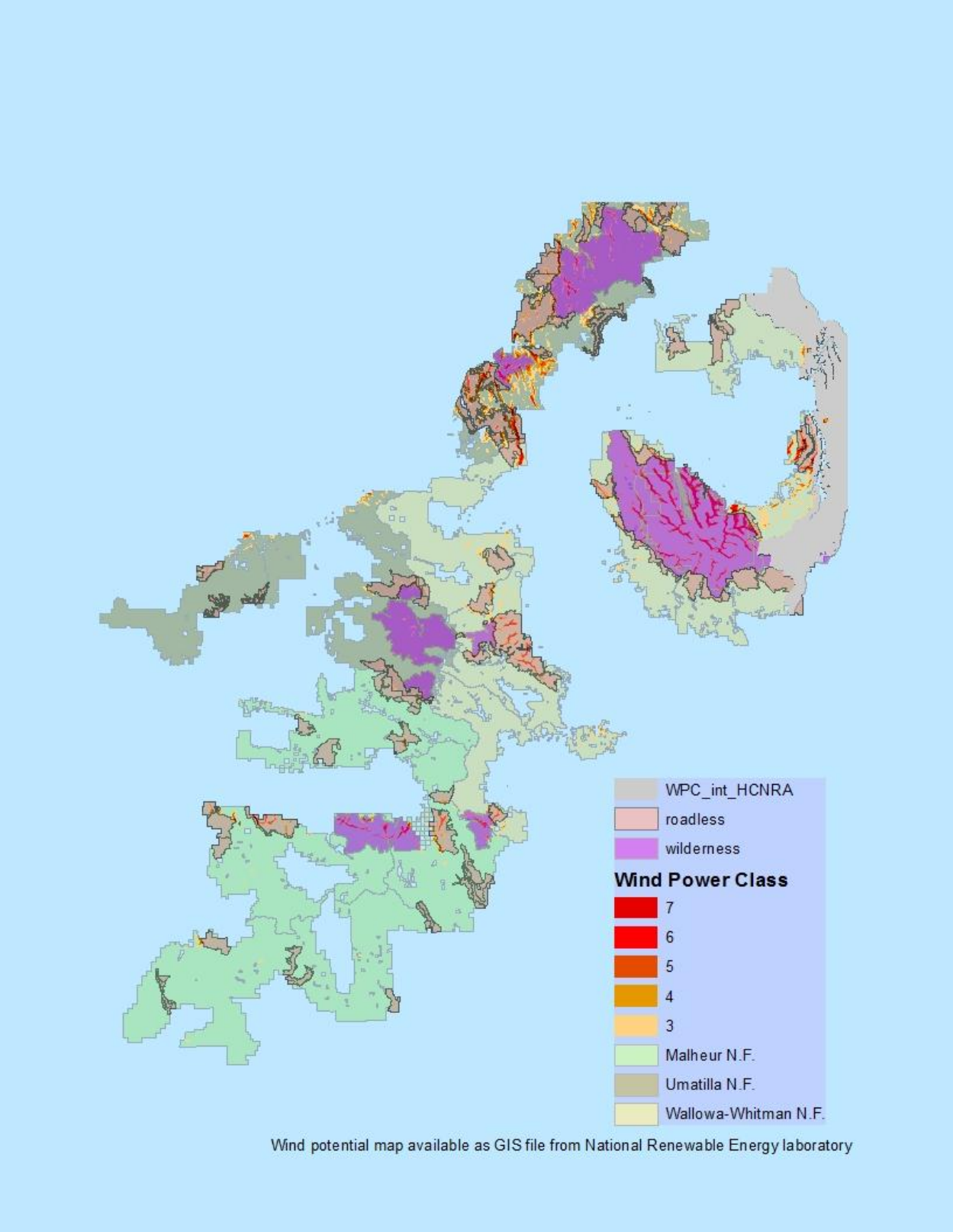
- Project proponents are responsible for demonstrating the feasibility of producing wind energy
- Before a permit authorizing wind energy development is issued, an environmental analysis will be conducted to address development of the proposed site and related actions
- As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the environmental analysis would be preceded by public scoping and the results of the analysis would be open for public comment.

- Any environmental analysis would have to consider the effects to affected resources, including but not limited to:
    - Sensitive, threatened or endangered species
    - Big game summer and winter range
    - Scenic quality and integrity
    - Key and Priority watersheds

- A monitoring plan is required if sensitive species would be potentially affected and will be developed in conjunction with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to determine effects to wildlife from any site proposed for development of wind energy (FSH 2609.13 Chapter 80).

The map on the following page shows the areas of the national forests with wind power potential by wind power class – a measure of wind speed and duration. The data used to create the map is provided by the U.S. Department of Energy, National Renewable Energy Laboratory, and are publicly available at: http://www.nrel.gov/gis/wind.html. Additional information about wind power and how the maps are created is available on this web site.

The map displays wind power class (3 through 7) within national forest boundaries in the Blue Mountains, overlain by existing wilderness and inventoried roadless areas. Areas with wind power potential that are within designated wilderness are legally excluded from development. The 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule prohibits road building or road reconstruction in inventoried roadless areas (36CFR294.12) making it cost prohibitive to establish and maintain wind energy towers in these areas. Remaining areas, totaling approximately 122,500 acres on the three national forests, are potentially suitable for development, although any area proposed for development can only be approved through a site-specific analysis that considers the effects to all potentially affected resources.



Wind potential map available as GIS file from National Renewable Energy laboratory