



Military Airspace Overlay Zone (OZ 15)

What:



This icon will be used across all materials to indicate State Law Updates, including Chapters, staff reports, etc.

Updates to state law for permitting commercial energy facilities necessitate coordination and notification of key agency partners like ODFW, the US Military, and the Oregon Department of Aviation. The proposed Military Airspace Overlay Zone (OZ 15) strengthens this process by ensuring applicants are aware, for large developments, of the military airspace in Wasco County.

Why:

- State law requirement
- Improved, early coordination with the US Military

Who:

US Military

Where & When:

Drafts go live on the project website (<https://wasco2040.com>) along with a virtual open house on May 4th. There you can comment or ask questions in the draft or using the comment/ask a planner functions. The first virtual Ask a Planner event is scheduled for May 18th at 5pm. In-person open houses are tentatively scheduled for May 24th and June 8th.

Citizens can submit comments or questions via mail, email, or the website any time between April and September 12th. The first hearing is on September 13th.

Potential Impacts

This overlay zone is applicable to projects exceeding 100' in height, which already require special review (Chapter 19), or projects that represent other interference like significant reflectivity. Staff expects it will be applicable, by in large, to commercial energy facility projects and transmission infrastructure. More typical land use permits, for farm uses and residences, will be excluded from this overlay zone.

The goal of the new zone is to ensure early coordination between applicants and the US Military for projects beneath the military training routes in Wasco County. These training routes have existed since 1940s.

The impact to commercial energy facilities or other large-scale projects within this overlay zone will be to ensure local military representatives are included in pre-application conferences. Mitigation strategies may be required to reduce impact, but the intent is not to prohibit any development.

More info:
Ask a Question:
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FAQ

Q: What is the Military Airspace Overlay Zone?

A: Staff is proposing to officially adopt the military training routes designated above Wasco County into a new overlay zone accompanied by new ordinance language that will ensure, for large or complex projects, that there is early coordination between developers and the military.

Q: What are military training routes?

A: Military training routes are bands of airspace that allow the US Military to conduct training operations. These routes have existed, as used today, since 1962.

Q: Is Wasco County granting permission for these training routes?

A: No. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has authority over airspace. The FAA worked with the US Military in the late 1950s to establish these routes.

Q: What is the purpose of the Military Airspace Overlay Zone?

A: The goal is to ensure early notification and coordination between developers and the US Military for large-scale developments that might potentially impact flight paths due to the height of structures, reflectivity, or radar interference. While this coordination already occurs for large projects with other partner agencies, state law was amended in 2019 to require coordination with the US Military. This has been part of the military's larger goal to ensure local jurisdictions are aware of their airspace and how local development can impact those routes. By adopting the map as an official overlay zone, Planning staff is able to share it ahead of a development permit application with potential developers. Planning staff will also be required, when a pre-application conference is convened, to invite local military representatives to provide comment. This will give applicants the opportunity to address and mitigate any concerns ahead of submitting a detailed permit.

Q: Does this stop development from happening in the new overlay zone?

A: No. The goal is not to prohibit development, but to ensure coordination to move projects forward in a safe and timely manner. At most, Planning staff or military representatives may recommend certain mitigation measures to reduce the impact to the flight paths. This might include moving the structures, adding anti-reflective coating, reducing the height of development, or possible avoidance by the military.

Q: What type of development is likely to trigger the need for coordination with the US Military?

A: Generally, the types of development that represent encroachment are large-scale, commercial energy facilities like wind turbine or transmission facilities. Other tall structures, like cellular towers or meteorological towers, may also fall into this review. It's important to note that all zones in Wasco County have a height restriction of 35'. This zone targets development over 100' tall. Tall structures already require a more complex review that will trigger coordination with aviation partners.

Q: What will the impact be on my property?

A: For common types of uses, like residential or agricultural structures, staff anticipates no change. Large projects, particularly when they are over 35' in height, already require extensive pre-application coordination and a more extensive review process. We don't anticipate any significant impacts, beyond ensuring early coordination which may remove time or cost delays that can occur when partner agencies are not involved early on in the process.