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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Washington Bluebirds Get a Boost From Wind Energy Developer

*PPM Energy Sponsors Bickleton School Shop Class to Build 250
Bluebird Boxes*

BICKLETON, Wash. – This small town in the Eastern Columbia River Gorge is known as the “Bluebird Capital of the World” because of the thousands of birds that nest in the region. The area provides prime bluebird habitat, except for a shortage of natural cavities for nests.

This season, the bluebirds are getting a boost from PPM Energy, who sponsored a bird house building project in the Bickleton High School shop class. Students built about 250 bluebird boxes ready-made for the needs of thousands of migratory birds. The boxes are part of a larger network of hundreds of bluebird homes in existence since the 1960s.

Although bluebirds are common at wind projects, they are not at high risk, according to PPM Energy biologists. Studies indicate the turbines will not hurt the bluebird population, which generally flies well below the blades. What they do need in order to thrive is the perfect home, built exactly to bluebird specifications – cleaning service included.

“There are hundreds of bluebird boxes now, and people enjoy sharing the bluebirds with visitors to the area,” said Ada Ruth Whitmore of Bickleton.

PPM Energy sponsored Bickleton High School students to build these new bluebird boxes based on the historic Brinkerhoff design. The design, created by the first builders of Bickleton’s bluebird boxes, specifies a 1 5/8-inch entrance hole. This is the exact size needed by all-blue Mountain Bluebirds and red-breasted Western Bluebirds, because it keeps out the other birds that might steal their nests.

“Driving through Bickleton, most anytime, you can see the beautiful little birds flitting around, and late spring is the best time to view them,” said Mrs. Whitmore, who carries on the tradition of the Brinkerhoffs, who founded the bluebird trail.

PPM Energy volunteers recently placed about 100 of the new boxes. The whole community volunteers to maintain the bluebird boxes each year. Volunteers clean the boxes every spring along a bluebird trail route covering about 300 miles.

“It’s very important to partner with the communities that host our wind energy projects, and helping to preserve Bickleton’s source of town pride and local tourism was a perfect match,” said Ty Daul, vice president of renewable energy for PPM.



A Mountain bluebird nests in one of several thousand bluebird boxes placed around Bickleton, Wash.