
From: Edwards, Kristen
Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2019 3:58 PM
To: PUC-DOCKET FILINGS
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Subject: EL19-003

Attached for filing, please find the below agency correspondence. By copy of this email, the same is being shared with all parties.

Regards,

Kristen N. Edwards
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South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
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PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

From: Kirschenmann, Tom
Sent: Tuesday, August 6, 2019 3:38 PM
To: Nelson, Chris; Hanson, Gary (PUC); Fiegen, Kristie
Cc: Kearney, Darren <Darren.Kearney@state.sd.us>; Edwards, Kristen <Kristen.Edwards@state.sd.us>; Meyer, Hilary
Subject: Grouse Lek Monitoring

Good afternoon Commissioners,

As part of Game, Fish and Parks' (GFP) commitment to serve as stewards of our state's outdoor resources, we believe it is our responsibility to partner with Crowned Ridge I to complete post-construction prairie grouse (sharp-tailed grouse and prairie chicken) lek monitoring. The grouse lek permit condition in the Crowned Ridge docket stipulates 2 years of post-construction monitoring of active grouse leks that are less than 1 mile from a turbine. The purpose of this note is to inform you that GFP plans to conduct 2 years of concurrent control site lek monitoring at leks adjacent to, but outside of the Crowned Ridge I project area.

During the July 9th Public Utilities Commission meeting, Commissioner Nelson raised a valid question and voiced concern over the lack of control sites to compare to study sites within the Crowned Ridge I Project. Lack of control sites would make it difficult to draw conclusions between differences in lek attendance as it relates to turbine operations or other natural factors (e.g. weather). We agree that information collected by Crowned

Ridge I during post-construction lek monitoring would be more useful if control sites were monitored and used as a comparison. Hence, we plan to collaborate in this effort and propose to locate and monitor approximately 10 active grouse leks during the 2 year post-construction period. Game Fish and Parks will identify active grouse leks outside of the project area that are located in similar habitat and terrain as those found in the Crowned Ridge I project area. All grouse leks monitored by GFP will be at least 5 miles from wind turbines to allow a sufficient buffer from potential disturbance. Game Fish and Parks will work with Crowned Ridge I to determine monitoring protocol as well as sampling schedules.

In addition to lek monitoring at the Crowned Ridge I project, GFP will also work with Sweetland Wind Farm in Hand County to monitor grouse leks. Sweetland has voluntarily agreed to conduct post-construction monitoring of active grouse leks less than 1 mile from turbines. GFP will also conduct 2 years of post-construction control site lek monitoring at leks adjacent to the Sweetland project area. We will work with Sweetland to develop monitoring protocols that are comparable to protocols used at Crowned Ridge I. The data collected from Sweetland will be used in a similar manner as that collected from Crowned Ridge I. We have reached out to both Crowned Ridge I and Sweetland to inform them and discuss the logistics of conducting concurrent lek monitoring efforts.

It's our hope that a more robust data set will be collected by monitoring for multiple years, at multiple locations across the state. Information collected from post-construction monitoring surveys will be used to help lessen the uncertainty of impacts of wind turbines to prairie grouse, and to improve our understanding of the buffer distances necessary to avoid or minimize significant adverse impacts to prairie grouse. This data will also be used to help answer questions about the cumulative impacts of wind development on prairie grouse on a state-wide level.

Should you have any follow-up questions, please don't hesitate to contact either Hilary Meyer or myself.

Sincerely,

Tom Kirschenmann
Wildlife Division Deputy Director

Tom Kirschenmann | *Wildlife Division Deputy Director & Chief of Wildlife*
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks
523 East Capitol Avenue | Pierre, SD 57501

