



January 13, 2010

Karen Cremer
South Dakota Public Utilities Commission
500 E. Capitol Ave.
Pierre, SD 57501

RECEIVED

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**SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC
UTILITIES COMMISSION**

Dear Karen Cremer:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the availability of the Proposed South Dakota PrairieWinds Project (Proposed Project) Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). Western Area Power Administration (Western) and Rural Utilities Service (RUS) have prepared the DEIS to address their respective Federal actions on the Proposed Project. We invite you to review the draft environmental findings, and we need your comments to ensure we have addressed the relevant issues and alternatives. This letter also serves as an invitation for your agency to participate in our interagency meeting on February 11, 2010.

PrairieWinds SD1, Incorporated (PrairieWinds), a wholly owned subsidiary of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric), is proposing to construct a new 151.5-megawatt nameplate capacity wind energy facility at one of two locations in south-central South Dakota, either near the Town of Wessington Springs or near the City of Winner. Basin Electric has requested to interconnect the Proposed Project with the transmission system owned and operated by Western; Western is considering whether to grant or deny the interconnection request. PrairieWinds has requested financing for the Proposed Project from RUS; RUS is considering financing the Proposed Project. PrairieWinds and Basin Electric are collectively termed the "Applicants".

A copy of the DEIS for the Proposed Project has been sent to you under separate cover. If you have not received a copy, please contact **Ms. Liana Reilly** (see below). Comments can be submitted through the Project website, or sent by letter, fax or e-mail and must be received by **March 1, 2010**.

Written comments on the scope of the DEIS should be addressed to Ms. Liana Reilly:

Ms. Liana Reilly
Western Area Power Administration
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213
Fax: (720) 962-7263
E-mail: sdprairiewinds@wapa.gov
Website: <http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/sdprairiewinds.htm>

For information on RUS financing, please contact:

Mr. Dennis Rankin
Rural Utilities Service – Utilities Program
1400 Independence Avenue SW, Mail Stop 1571, Room 2244
Washington D.C. 20250-1571
Telephone: (202) 720-1953
Fax: (202) 720-0820
E-mail: dennis.rankin@wdc.usda.gov

Western and RUS invite you to attend an interagency meeting on February 11, 2010, to provide you input on the Proposed Project DEIS. During the meeting, we would like to discuss the project component details and obtain input on the draft environmental findings. The interagency meeting will be held at:

Rawlins Municipal Library
1000 East Church Street
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-7421
Thursday, February 11, 2010
10 a.m. to 12 p.m. CST

Western and RUS have also scheduled an open house and public hearing to ensure that interested members of the public, potentially affected landowners and lessees, and Federal, state, and local agencies, and tribal representatives have an opportunity to provide input on the draft findings and alternatives considered in the DEIS. The open house and public hearing are scheduled for:

Cozard Memorial Library
110 E Lawler Ave
Chamberlain, SD 57325-1399
(605) 234-4414
Thursday, February 11, 2010
Open House: 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. CST
Hearing: 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. CST

Western, RUS, and the Applicants' representatives will be available at the interagency meeting and public open house for one-on-one discussions, to provide information about the Proposed Project, answer questions, and take verbal and written comments from interested parties. The meeting facilities are wheelchair accessible. Please contact **Ms. Liana Reilly** at **(800) 336-7288** if you need other accommodations to attend.

The Proposed Project would involve the installation and operation of a 151.5- MW wind-powered energy generation facility that would feature 101 wind turbine generators. Each turbine would have a hub height of 262 feet and a rotor diameter of 252 feet. The total height of each wind turbine would be 389 feet with a blade in the vertical position. The towers would be constructed of tubular steel, approximately 15 feet in diameter at the base, with internal joint flanges. The color of the towers and rotors would be standard white or off-white. During construction, a work/staging area at each turbine would include the crane pad and rotor assembly area, temporarily disturbing an area of approximately 500 feet by 500 feet, and permanently disturbing a 25-foot radius around each turbine. Ten additional turbine locations were identified and analyzed in the DEIS. These turbines may be utilized as contingent turbine locations for the Proposed Project if specific turbine locations are eliminated as a result of additional resource surveys and engineering siting, or they may be installed within the selected site at a later date, pending future load, transmission availability, and renewable production standard requirements.

Each wind turbine would be connected by a service road for access and a 34.5-kilovolt (kV) underground electrical collection system that would ultimately route the power from each turbine to a collector substation, where voltage would be increased for interconnection to Western's transmission system. Approximately 30 to 40 miles of new access roads would be built to facilitate both constructing and maintaining the turbines. Approximately 25 to 35 miles of existing roads would be used and, where appropriate, improved. The underground collector system trench would be approximately 60 miles long. The communication system would be located within the same trenches.

Two sites for the wind-powered generation facility are considered in the DEIS. One site is located on about 37,000 acres and is approximately 15 miles north of White Lake, South Dakota, within Brule, Aurora, and Jerauld counties. The other alternative site would be located within an area about 83,000 acres, and is about eight miles south of Winner, South Dakota, and is entirely within Tripp County.

The site that is approximately 37,000 acres near White Lake, South Dakota, would require one 34.5-kV to 230-kV collector substation as well as a 230-kV transmission line to interconnect to a new 230-kV interconnection point at Western's existing Wessington Springs Substation. The Wessington Springs Substation is located approximately nine miles from the proposed collector

substation. Regardless of route, the transmission line length would be approximately 11 miles. The proposed transmission line would be built using steel single-pole structures. The structures would be between 85 and 95 feet high with a span of about 800 feet.

The alternative site, approximately 83,000 acres near Winner, South Dakota, would require one 34.5-kV to 115-kV collector substation as well as a 115-kV transmission line to interconnect to a new 115-kV interconnection point at Western's existing Winner Substation. The Winner Substation is approximately 9 miles from the proposed collector substation. Depending on route, the proposed transmission line would be approximately 10 to 11 miles long. Other facilities necessary for this site would be similar to those described for the site above.

The no action alternative has also been considered.

We want to ensure that any important environmental concerns and natural resources and/or places of interest for your Agency within the project area have been considered and addressed in the DEIS. We appreciate receiving any comments that you have and we look forward to seeing you at the interagency meeting and/or public hearing.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nicholas J. Stas".

Nick Stas
Environmental Manager
Upper Great Plains Region
Western Area Power Administration