

February 5, 2018

Wendy K. Christman

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Clark SD 57225
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Re: **EL-17-055 CROCKER WIND FARM PROJECT APPLICATION**

Dear Madam Chairperson and members of the SD Public Utilities Commission,

I am a landowner in Woodland and Cottonwood Townships of Clark County, an active member of the community and a supporter of the Crocker Wind Farm Project.

My name is Wendy Christman. I was born in Webster, raised on a farm near Bradley, have a Bachelor of Science in Education degree from Northern State University and married a West-river farm boy, who became a pipefitter-welder for over 40 years. Following our marriage, we lived in ND for 5 years, where I substituted in the school system while my husband worked in the construction of several coal-fired, nuclear and natural gas power plants. We then purchased our farm in the Crocker Hills in Dec. 1979, where we currently reside. Due to the high interest rates of the 1980s, it is doubtful we could have survived solely on farm/agricultural income so my husband went back to the power plant work force part time, travelling to surrounding states and I continued substitute teaching, while raising our children (who graduated from Clark High School) and maintaining the farm. We were grateful for his opportunity to help build the Northern Border Pipeline Pumping Station in the 1990s, located approximately 1 ¼ miles from our residence! As most farmers can relate, times have not always been easy.

I have a deep love for the land, the cattle we raise and our family life on the farm. The struggles of varying and often times poor prices for commodities, unpredictable markets, weather related hardships and continued rising costs have taken their toll but have not crushed my spirit.

I have been employed by the Clark School System for 25 years. My husband and I support our Farmers Elevator, our local veterinarians, our Community Oil Coop and all businesses, and do our banking in Clark, while shopping locally. The closing of McCain's Foods Processing Plant several years ago had a devastating effect on Clark, as well as the surrounding area, from which they have never recovered. Businesses closed, families left, and school enrollment dropped....a depressing aura clouded our county.

Approximately 8 years ago, a ray of hope was offered Clark County which would help restore and bring back life to our town, our county and surrounding areas. It is now known as the Crocker Wind Farm Project. Geronimo Energy held a public informational meeting in Clark on July 1, 2014, which I and my husband attended. Considering the knowledge and experience of my husband's farming/pipefitting career and the history of the energy "world" and upon much research, educating ourselves, and personal visits with landowners actually living among wind towers, my husband and I were convinced we wanted to be a part of this form of renewable energy to benefit not only us, but the entire county and state. By the way, our primary source of income is raising beef cattle so it was imperative there would be no harm to them from the turbines, should they be placed on our land. Subsequently, we signed a lease giving Geronimo Energy permission to access our land in order to complete the many various studies needed.

It is the consumer and society in general who are demanding renewable, green energy as the way of the future! It is also they who dictate what the power companies do. The closing of aging coal and nuclear plants is affected by the call for safe, renewable green energy. **We** have the land **and** the right as owners to use it for our betterment. We also (could) have a clean fuel source, (which doesn't produce odors or need water, such as is needed for power

plants) and the wonderful opportunity offered us by Geronimo Energy to benefit **everyone** through increased tax revenue at the township, including much improved roads, county and state levels, school funding, local jobs and increased business incomes. Let's bring industry back to Clark. Already, thousands of dollars have been donated by Geronimo to local and area fire departments, ambulance crews and 4H clubs.

When the opportunity to harvest a *new* crop on our land was in it's beginning stages, my husband and I never once even considered there would or could be opposition! In our 38 years of planting crops, no one has ever raised a ruckus about whether we planted wheat or oats, soybeans or corn. The land was purchased by us. It now belongs to us. We pay taxes on it. We own it. Does someone else have the right to dictate **anything** regarding our farming practices and/or income sources? I think **NOT!** Sadly, landowner property rights are becoming a very real issue.

A few of the strongest opponents are people who have moved here recently from other states, where they made their living, and decided to build homes on land they inherited or purchased a few acres to build a home to use only occasionally, such as during hunting season, for instance. They do not make their living off the land and, in my opinion, should not impose their false and misleading views on those of us who do in an attempt to prevent our using our land as we see fit. Comments have been made that wind turbines could devalue the land. My comment is that they could increase land value! They are a beautiful, neat and clean addition to the landscape and a true sign of progress! I remember as a child, how **grateful** my parents were when they were able to have a windmill to pump water from the well. We should all be so appreciative.

We already know South Dakota is a leader in wind energy and I doubt we here tonight need to convince you of the need for and benefit from this project. I do want to emphasize, however, the fact that Geronimo Energy has worked tirelessly relocating towers and/or even eliminating towers in order to respectfully accommodate our neighbors. This attests to their integrity and commitment. They have also voluntarily conducted studies which were not required by the PUC or our county to show the project will not harm the health and welfare of the community **or** the environment. This, too, affirms my consistent faith in the professionalism of this company. Many of the landowners have lost towers, ourselves included, and yet continue in support of the project as a whole. Why? Because **it's the right thing to do.....** for everyone.

Now that all the concerns have been alleviated and all the conditions have been met, I close with this...I am truly thankful for those who have made their living off the land for generations and it is my desire to continue that tradition, which The Crocker Wind Farm Project will aid in accomplishing. Currently, there are approximately 60 landowner families (that's not only individuals!) signed up to allow their 30,000+ acres to be used in favor of this project! Wind is a cost-efficient, clean, renewable form of energy which is available to provide immeasurable benefits not only to those directly involved in the project but also to those who have chosen **not** to participate! South Dakota, as a whole, will benefit by keeping the power grid stable for our country and thus, a better economy. I'm sure we can all agree that we do like electricity! The time is right to work together, take advantage of the great opportunities offered us and **welcome** this project to our county. It's called **PROGRESS!** Let's embrace it.

Thank you, Ms. Fiegen, Mr. Hanson and Mr. Nelson, for your service to our state of South Dakota and your time, efforts and consideration in **this** matter. I appreciate you and beseech you to approve the Crocker Wind Farm Permit.

Respectfully,



Wendy Christman