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From: Ryan Caulfield [REDACTED]

Sent: Thursday, June 7, 2018 1:37 PM

To: PUC <PUC@state.sd.us>

Subject: [EXT] EL17-055 Crocker Wind Farm

EL17-055 Crocker Wind Farm

Madam Chairperson and Commissioners;

Hi, my name is Ryan Caulfield, I am a landowner in Clark County, some of the land I own is 1/2 mile from the footprint and all is within 4 miles. I am very much in favor of the wind project and I am also a huge supporter of landowner rights. I have followed this docket closely and I can't help but notice in the testimony of the staff and interveners there has been no mention in respects to rights of the participating landowners. As a matter of fact the landowner witnesses could not even mention property rights at the hearing. This is very troubling. The two interveners seem to think they can grab onto the rights of the geese, cranes, bats and other wildlife to try and kill this project, but what about the rights of the people who own the land, pay the taxes on the land and control the day to day operation of the land. Do not forget about them!

We as farmers and ranchers are all conservationists, we all care about the wildlife and the ecosystem around us, some of us plant food plots, some

leave wetland, some rotational graze to allow for nesting and some choose to do very little. No matter how we value wildlife, all of our land, whether crop land or pasture/hay land, is used by our wildlife. Most of us rely on our land to make a living so we have to balance wildlife with profitability. Some use outside money to make their land investments and choose to use their land to create hunting habitats. In my mind, just because someone gears their land towards hunting to bag a trophy or to have a high quantity bird hunt, does not mean they are more of a conservationist than the rest of us. I am sure they take advantage of the programs and subsidies provided by county, state and federal governments as well as local organizations. We all are in favor of maintaining an ample wildlife population, but we have also seen how over populations of wildlife can be detrimental to the area and how hard it can be on maintaining population when Mother Nature gets too adverse. It seems to me wildlife is being used as a crutch by the interveners to push their agenda. I understand the concern but I believe this project will have very little Impact.

Another concern the two interveners have is high concentration of grass land in the area. I believe there some potential towers to be placed on land with grassland easements, the rest are on non-easement acres. They refer to some of these acres as “potentially undisturbed lands”, the problem there is, if those producers chose to dissect part or whole tracts of this land and turn it into crop land, with a simple plan with the local farm agency, it would be their right to do so. With drought resistant crops and minimum and no-till practice this would be a viable option for them especially if the crop prices keep trending upwards. We all know that land with crop history has a higher value than grassland, also with crop land you have crop insurance, possibly CRP contracts and now on marginal crop land government programs will pay big money for the restoration of crop land back to native. These producers choose to keep it in grassland because they are good stewards of their land and they know what works best. Many of these folks take great pride that their land is not in a government easement and feel they have rights to make their own decisions. Now it seems like some staff and government agencies are trying to punish them for a job well done by assuming they can dictate how these non-easement grasslands are handled in this project. This is wrong in every way. This is their land not yours and it has been kept the way it is by their choices not yours. I feel that the wind towers and access roads would be much less invasive to this land than a mass shift to crop land would be. If these producers were allowed to

supplement their income with wind, they would be much less likely to make any drastic changes to their native lands. This is great opportunity for this land and will, by far, have way less impact in the long run. We all know it's not easy being a cow-calf producer in modern day eastern South Dakota, I feel wind towers and grassland will go hand in hand in protecting this way of life.

The Governor recently expressed his concerns with the financial downturn of agriculture in South Dakota. He said to add value to our products and to process as much of what we grow before it leaves our state will be very beneficial to our future. I strongly agree. We add value to our corn with ethanol and feed by-products, we add value to our soybeans with oil processing and feed products, we add value with livestock feeding operations, we add value with meat processing facilities, we add value with hunting lodges (some which operate in unison with wind towers), we add value with organic farms, farmers markets and specialty producers, and many other ways too numerous to mention . If they want to process our wind and pay our land owners and state and local taxes on it, go for it. Adding value to our operations will be key to the future of our family farms. There are many ways to grow our farms for the future now days and we need to know we have the right to do so on our lands. Family farms are the backbone of this state and the decisions we make are way beyond financial decisions, we hunt, we fish, we enjoy wildlife, we take pride in our croplands, we take pride in our grasslands, we are proud of what we produce, we are proud of what we leave idle, we are proud of our conservation efforts, we want to leave thing better than they were, we teach our next generation to do better than we did, and we don't appreciate the Chicken Little tactics of the people who oppose what we do and the decisions we make. Why do we have to keep reminding people that we own this land, whether we bought it, inherited it or are busting our butts to pay for it, it is ours!

Property rights need to be taken much more serious in this process. At the PUC public hearing the president of the South Dakota Farmer Union expressed grave concern of how landowner right have been ignored in this process. Recently the president of the South Dakota Farm Bureau made comments on this docket as well, saying rights of landowners to site wind towers need to be respected. This project is supported by our Governors Office, several local business owners and managers, several local land

owners and has received a great deal of support from the citizens of Clark County and the surrounding communities.

Farmer and ranchers are generally a people who have broad shoulders and can absorb a lot of ridicule and blame, it seems as of late we are the “go to” when individuals don’t know who else to blame. There are a lot of us keeping a distant eye on this project and other property rights issues of fellow land owners. For the greater good of all, do not allow the loud minority to wake a Sleeping Giant! When the dust settles and the nocebo effects wear off this will be a very positive project for Clark County, this is Progress not Armageddon. We all know the most heated and passionate debates in schools and government, whether local or state, typically come down to one thing. MONEY. Here is our opportunity to generate revenue from something besides property taxes!!! Amen.

I know we are blessed with very qualified, respectful and pro active PUC trio that take great care of our great state. I ask of you to keep landowner rights on the forefront and please approve the Crocker Wind Farm. Thank you for your time.

Ryan Caulfield

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Sent from my iPad