



**MEETING** Crocker Wind Farm - Update  
**DATE/TIME** December 13, 2016, 10 AM CST  
**LOCATION** 523 E Capitol Ave, Pierre SD  
**PARTICIPANTS** Melissa Schmit (Geronimo Energy, LLC)  
Joyce Pickle (WEST)  
Silka Kempema (SDGFP)  
Natalie Gates, Connie Mueller (US FWS)

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- Melissa provided an update on the schedule for the Project – the Grant County Conditional Use Permit Application will be submitted in December and the SDPUC application will likely be submitted in January 2017.
- Final survey reports, results to date for ongoing avian surveys, map of compressed project boundary/current layout, and maps with environmental survey data (wetlands, cultural resources, and potential Dakota skipper habitat) shared with group prior to meeting.
  - Tier 3 Survey Discussion
    - Eagles:
      - No eagle nests documented within five miles of the Project. Overall the Project area appears to be a low use area by eagles, with only one eagle observed in the Project in October (eagle use surveys started in April 2016).
    - Avian Use:
      - Species list and mapped flight paths provided. SDGFP recommends supplementing the data with information from the Breeding Bird Atlas surveys.
      - BBCS is being drafted and will include a discussion of potential risks to waterfowl. USFWS recommends including publicly available information on waterfowl fatalities of surrounding wind projects including the Tatanka wind project. Agencies also recommend including a discussion on whooping cranes – although the Crocker Project is outside of the defined 95% migration corridor, Clark County has had documented occurrences of cranes.
    - Bats:
      - Northern long-eared bat summer presence/absence study determined no NLEB present during summer/breeding season in the Project’s original boundary. The lack of suitable habitat in the northern expansion area does not warrant additional



- o surveys. The USFWS and SDGFP agreed surveys in the northern expansion are not necessary.
- o Acoustic monitoring equipment (two sets of ground- and raised microphone ; at two met towers) for the Project was removed in November for the general bat activity studies which recorded activity from April through October 2016). Results/report expected in January and no additional general activity monitoring is proposed.
- Dakota skipper:
  - o Assessment identified multiple areas of potential habitat. Agencies recommend flight surveys in 2017 in these areas if construction impacts are proposed. Connie also requested that WEST provide additional information on how tribal hay lands (some of which have been documented to have skipper populations in other areas of South Dakota) were taken into account in the habitat assessment.
- Lek surveys:
  - o Spring 2016 survey results did not record any leks within the Project's original boundary, and there were no historic state records of leks (as of 2015 SD G&P data) within two miles of the original project area or expansion area. Jennifer Stucker, avian biologist who led WEST's lek surveys, noted that the landforms and habitat type in Crocker area, including the expansion area, is not highly suitable, and does not anticipate leks to occur in the northern expansion area. Habitat and landforms to the south and west of Crocker is more suitable for lekking, as is reinforced by the historic lek data. Geronimo does not propose 2017 lek surveys at Crocker, including in the northern expansion area. USFWS and SDGFP stated that they felt like lek surveys may be warranted here, and would check with the grouse biologists in their department. In particular, Silka would confer with her staff on their thoughts, and would provide any feedback, along with any historic lek data for the northern expansion area.
- USFWS Grassland Easement Review/NEPA
  - o Connie field-checked the USFWS easements in the Crocker project area and had provided comments on the turbine array in early December. The group decided to revisit her comments once Geronimo provides an updated layout (layout is being adjusted to accommodate results of wetland field work, cultural resources surveys, skipper habitat surveys, etc.), along with maps that show these biological resources and the updated layout, including access roads and electrical.
  - o Geronimo proposed submitting a draft EA to the USFWS following Dakota skipper flight surveys in late June/early July. The draft EA would therefore include all biological and cultural resource field survey results. The EA would take a conservative approach to avian use and approach to avoidance, minimization, mitigation and adaptive management in order to account for less than two full



years of data. The USFWS stated that this may be an acceptable approach to timing of the EA.

- Follow up items:

- Draft BBS will be submitted to agencies in January for review.
- Natalie to provide BBS guidelines from Region 6.
- Silka to provide any historic lek data for the northern expansion area, along with any feedback from staff on potential for leks in this part of the County.
- Geronimo to provide updated maps and layout shapefiles.
- WEST to provide updated map that shows the skipper habitat assessment results along with current project boundary and turbine layout
- Silka to provide information on Breeding Bird Atlas survey data for area near the Crocker project