

BEFORE THE SOUTH DAKOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

DOCKET NO. EL18-053

**In the Matter of the Application of Deuel Harvest Wind Energy LLC for a Permit of
a Wind Energy Facility and a 345-kV Transmission Line in Deuel County**

Direct Testimony of Intervenor Heath Stone
March 14, 2019

1 **Q. State your name and where you reside.**

2 A. My name is Heath Stone and I live at 803 Lac Qui Parle St. Gary, SD 57237.

3

4 **Q. Please describe your education and background.**

5 A. I received a Bachelor Science degree in Wildlife and Fisheries Sciences from
6 South Dakota State University in 2009. I grew up south of Gary three miles and
7 currently reside in Gary. I work alongside my father, Will Stone, run our family
8 business, South Dakota Pheasant hunts and also raise about 6,000 ring-neck
9 pheasants annually. My Grandfather William "Bill" Stone first started hosting
10 hunters in the 1960's and we continue to carry on this tradition. In 1985, South
11 Dakota Pheasant Hunts became a licensed preserve to provide more opportunity
12 for our hunters by providing a longer hunting season. We have been in business
13 for over 35 years and host on average 200 hunters per year who hunt multiple
14 days at our pheasant preserve from September-March. I myself and my family
15 also utilize our property to hunt, recreate and provide outdoor education. I have
16 always had a strong interest in wildlife and habitat since childhood and continue
17 to this day.

18

19 **Q. Do you own property near the Deuel Harvest Project?**

20 A. Yes, I own 160 acres and I, along with my three sisters, are partners with Stone's
21 Conservation Acres which owns 225 acres, both are adjacent to the projects
22 southern boundaries. Property is located in Glenwood Township T-116-N, R48-W
23 Sec. 34 & 35.

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26 **Q. Please explain your position with respect to this docket?**

27 **A.** I have concerns with our pheasant hunting operation and the wildlife and habitat
28 in the area.

29

30 **Q. What concerns do you have with your pheasant hunting operation?**

31 **A.** The loss of business, a quality hunt, and the safety concerns to our property. Our
32 clients come to our operation to get away from their busy lives to relax and have
33 a good time. Many times, comments are made on how peaceful and quiet it is
34 when they arrive to hunt and admire the breath taking scenery. The un-cluttered
35 view is what our hunters have become accustomed to. They mention how
36 awesome it is to not see tall structures, concrete, asphalt and hear the buzzing
37 sound of vehicles. Turbines 103, 109, 110, 111, 112 will have a direct impact to
38 our operation by obstructing the view and hindering the peace and quietness our
39 clients expect. If this is lost, we will lose business.

40

41 **Q. What are your concerns regarding local pheasant population in regards to
42 close proximity to wind turbines?**

43 **A.** I am concerned how the turbines will effect pheasant distribution in our area and
44 avoidance by the birds utilizing and staying near our property. In James Dupuie's
45 paper, Ring-necked Pheasant responses to wind energy in Iowa, he states "Our
46 results suggested that wind turbine density ($\beta Density = -0.169$) negatively

47 affected pheasant counts and distance to the nearest turbine ($\beta_{Distance} = 0.001$)
48 positively affected pheasants counts” (Dupuie 2018).

49 **Q. What are the safety concerns with the project in regards to the property**
50 **you listed above?**

51 **A.** My concerns are with the placement of turbines in close proximity to the property
52 listed above. These towers pose a direct threat to our property with the threat of
53 debris and fire from a malfunctioning turbine. If turbines 103, 109, 110, 111
54 malfunction, these turbines will throw debris onto our property. The risk of fire is
55 also a big concern. In Arlington, Oregon, a turbine sparked a grassland fire
56 consuming over 2000 acres (McDowell). Turbines 103, 109, 110, 111 are located
57 adjacent to our property. Although tower 103 is located in an agricultural field, the
58 potential risk is there especially if when a prevailing northerly wind is present
59 casting embers downwind into the grassland that is located to the south of this
60 tower. The vegetative state of the neighboring property where tower 109, 110,
61 111 are located is all grassland with heavy fuel loading and continues right up to
62 our property line which is also grassland. If a fire started on the neighbor’s
63 property it would spread to our property and destroy our habitat. If this is
64 destroyed, especially during the hunting season, we are not only out of business
65 for the year but for years to come, with all the tree belts we have planted on the
66 property, this would take years to recover, severely impacting our business.

67 **Q. What concerns do you have regarding the wildlife and habitat in the**
68 **project?**

69 **A.** The project area is scattered with numerous wetlands, grasslands and
70 woodlands. These ecosystems host numerous of species year round.

71

72 **Q. What are the species of concern?**

73 **A.** All avian species are of concern, but specifically in regards to waterfowl and Bald
74 Eagles. This area is host to a complex system of wetlands that range from
75 seasonal to permanent. I have concern with turbines in close proximity to
76 numerous wetlands in the project. After reviewing Deuel Harvest Water Resource
77 map (Appendix A, Figure A-6), there are numerous turbines that will disrupt the
78 movement and distribution of waterfowl. I have hunted near and within the project
79 area my whole life and have seen how waterfowl use the area for breeding,
80 nesting, roosting and travel corridors, specifically the area from Rush Lake to
81 Lake Francis and the whole southern area of the project. Not only does the
82 waterfowl utilize the bodies of water within the area, they also utilize the
83 agricultural fields for feeding. Many of these fields that the waterfowl use have
84 wind turbines placed on them and will affect the use of these areas.

85 I also have concern for the number of bald eagles that utilize the area. Every
86 spring, Bald Eagles migrate through area and several pairs that call this area
87 home. After reviewing the Bird and Bat Conservation Strategy (Appendix O)
88 raptor nest survey, I noticed they missed an eagle nest North of Lake Alice. This
89 nest should not have been missed since it has been documented by Adam
90 Behnke, who is the Conservation Officer in Deuel County. The nest has been
91 observed since 2016 and is current to date. This makes me question the way

92 Deuel Harvest went about collecting data for these surveys and at what length
93 did they go to acquire the most current data. This disregard for the bald eagle
94 nest located north of Lake Alice, goes to show the lack of communication they
95 had with SDGFP. The setback that Deuel Harvest gave the known eagle nests
96 outside of the project area of two miles on the Environmental Constraints Map
97 (Appendix A Figure A-3), should also be applied to the eagle nest that is located
98 north of Lake Alice.

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100 **Q. Does this conclude your testimony?**

101 **A. Yes**

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106 Dupuie, James N., "Ring-necked Pheasant responses to wind energy in Iowa" (2018). Graduate

107 Theses and Dissertations. 16346. <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/etd/16346/>

108 McDowell, Jade. "Wind Turbine sparks grass fire." East Oregonian 3 August 2018:

109 <https://www.eastoregonian.com/news/local/wind-turbine-sparks-grass->

110 [fire/article_c8471827-bf9b-5a07-9f40-d4c2f540b8fd.html](https://www.eastoregonian.com/news/local/wind-turbine-sparks-grass-fire/article_c8471827-bf9b-5a07-9f40-d4c2f540b8fd.html) 3 March 2018

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