



## Exhibit A

## SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF GAME, FISH AND PARKS

523 EAST CAPITOL AVENUE | PIERRE, SD 57501

January 5, 2021

Mark Wengierski  
Scout Clean Energy  
5775 Flatiron Parkway  
Suite 120  
Boulder, CO 80301

RE: Substitution of Grouse Telemetry Study for Second Year of Post Construction Mortality Monitoring at Sweetland Wind Farm

Dear Mark,

The South Dakota Department of Game, Fish and Parks (GFP) has been in discussions with Sweetland Wind Farm (Sweetland), a wholly owned subsidiary of Scout Clean Energy and Western Ecosystems Technology (WEST) Inc. to collaboratively fund and complete a 3-year prairie grouse (greater prairie chickens and sharp-tailed grouse) telemetry study at Sweetland Wind Farm. This project is separate from, but related to, the current collaborative prairie grouse lek monitoring study being conducted by GFP, Sweetland and WEST. These complementary projects have been designed to address impacts of wind energy development on prairie grouse. GFP believes pursuing this additional project would be a wise use of project funds.

As such, GFP supports the modification of condition no. 35 in Settlement Stipulation EL 19-012 for Sweetland to only require the owner/operator of the project to conduct 1 year of post construction mortality monitoring to assess predictions of wildlife fatality risk at the project, which is consistent with the voluntary US Fish and Wildlife Service Land-based Wind Energy Guidelines. Sweetland has agreed that the funds set aside for the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of post-construction mortality monitoring would then be reallocated to help fund a three-year grouse telemetry study at the project. The proposed modified condition no. 35 is as follows:

*Applicant agrees to undertake one year of independently conducted post-construction avian and bat mortality monitoring for the Project, and to provide a copy of the report and all further reports to the United States Fish and Wildlife Services, South Dakota Game, Fish & Parks (SD GF&P), Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) and the Commission. Applicant also agrees to allocate the funds that would have been used for a second year of post-construction mortality monitoring to help fund a three-year grouse telemetry study at the Project. In the event the State Wildlife Grant does not authorize funding for the proposed three-year grouse telemetry study at the Project, Applicant would then conduct a second year of post-construction avian and bat mortality monitoring.*

For additional background, GFP is working with Sweetland to pursue funding for this project with a State Wildlife Grant. State Wildlife Grants are used to support projects that benefit species of greatest conservation need and that help implement South Dakota's Wildlife Action Plan (<https://gfp.sd.gov/wildlife-action-plan/>). Through this program, 35% of the project budget must come from non-federal matching funds. Sweetland is proposing to re-allocate funding budgeted for the 2<sup>nd</sup>

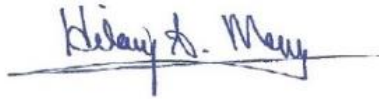
year of post-construction mortality monitoring at the project, to be used as the 35% match to fund a 3-year telemetry study. The remaining 65% of the project budget would come from a State Wildlife Grant. This research project presents an opportunity for a collaborative partnership between the wind energy industry (Sweetland/Scout), GFP and WEST Inc. to address knowledge gaps related to wind and wildlife interactions in South Dakota. We hope that this research will help GFP and wind energy developers to work together to develop future conservation actions in the form of siting recommendations and decisions that may affect prairie grouse populations in South Dakota.

GFP biologists have partnered with biologists from WEST Inc. to develop survey methodology. This methodology will be comparable to methodology currently being used at the Crowned Ridge I and II wind farms in northeastern South Dakota. Annual and final reports will be completed by WEST Inc. and provided to GFP and Sweetland. GFP staff will also work with WEST Inc. biologists to publish the results of this study in a peer-reviewed journal.

In closing, we support the modification of permit condition no. 35 to require 1 year of post-construction mortality monitoring at Sweetland, and to reallocate funding from the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of post-construction mortality monitoring to be used towards a prairie grouse telemetry study.

Please contact me if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Hilary A. Morey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Hilary Morey  
Environmental Review Senior Biologist  
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Pierre, SD 57501  
[hilary.morey@state.sd.us](mailto:hilary.morey@state.sd.us)

cc: Darren Kearny (SD PUC)  
Natalie Gates (USFWS)  
Chad LeBeau (WEST Inc.)  
Kurt Smith (WEST Inc.)