

North Bend Wind Project, LLC

1360 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 400
Houston, Texas 770056



July 20, 2022

Via E-Mail (anthony.crutch@engie.com)

Hughes County Board of Adjustment
104 E Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501
Attn: Kevin Hipple

Dear Kevin Hipple :

I am writing on behalf of North Bend Wind Project, LLC (the "Project") in response to the concerns that have been raised regarding Environmental Wildlife at the North Bend Wind Project. Our understanding is that documentation was submitted in pre-filed testimony to the South Dakota PUC and to Hughes County.

North Bend Wind Project, LLC hired a 3rd party consultant Western EcoSystems Technology, Inc. who provides contract research nationally and internationally for industry, government, and private organizations. I am attaching a joint response in this letter.

My team and I remain available to answer any questions and provide any additional information that you may need with respect to the concerns addressed by the above information.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Very truly yours,

North Bend Wind Project, LLC

By: Anthony Crutch

Anthony Crutch, Project Developer

North Bend Wind Project, LLC

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Attachment A

North Bend Response to Michael Bollweg

Michael Bollweg provided pre-filed testimony submitted to the South Dakota Public Utility Commission (SD PUC Docket EL21-018) to the Hughes County Commissioners in opposition to the approval of a potential Hughes County Use Permit. The opposition is based primarily on concerns related to prairie grouse (sharp-tailed grouse and greater prairie chickens) and pheasant avoidance behavior in addition to socio-economic impacts to grassland bird hunting opportunities north of the proposed project, specifically associated to the Tumbleweed Lodge. North Bend Wind, LLC (North Bend) would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge Mr. Bollweg's concerns and provide some context for the Commission's consideration and how North Bend Wind, LLC is working with state and federal wildlife agencies to address these concerns. North Bend has been conducting wildlife surveys in the proposed project area since 2016 including prairie grouse lek surveys. Since the onset of the first surveys in 2016, North Bend has met with South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) regularly to discuss survey results and recommendations. Since 2016, North Bend has been using these data to develop infrastructure layouts that avoided or minimized disturbance to grasslands by placing infrastructure (including wind turbines) within crop fields or otherwise disturbed lands or towards the periphery of disturbed grasslands to avoid habitats important for prairie grouse as recommended by SDGFP. North Bend is continuing to work with state and federal agencies (SDGFP, US Fish and Wildlife Service [USFWS], and Western Area Power Administration) to take appropriate measures to avoid, reduce, and minimize potential impacts to wildlife within the proposed project area. To this end, North Bend and SDGFP have partnered on a research project to collect much needed information on breeding grassland birds to help develop future conservation actions in the form of siting recommendations and decisions. This support letter from SDGFP was provided to USFWS and the SD PUC on July 16, 2021.

Hunting opportunities are important to local residents and landowners alike. According to SDGFP, all private hunting preserves are required to release a minimum of 600 rooster pheasants each season. Based on the most recent SDGFP harvest results available (2020-2021), 91% of all pheasants harvested on private shooting preserves state-wide were released birds. Furthermore, more recent literature indicates wind turbines have no significant adverse effects on grouse and pheasant behavior. A meta-analysis of previous studies has suggested there is no significant adverse effect on grouse behavior in relation to distance to wind turbine (LeBeau et al. 2020). Additionally, in a 2018 study in Iowa, focused on ring-necked pheasants, found that pheasants were "virtually unaffected" by wind turbines (Duprie 2018).

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In conclusion, North Bend has taken great efforts to understand the potential wildlife impacts that the development of this potential wind project may have and have worked with state and federal wildlife agencies to avoid, reduce, and minimize potential impacts, including those to prairie grouse species. North Bend looks forward to continuing the collaborative relationship with SDGFP and USFWS into the future.