



**United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development**

MAR 11 2008

Susan E. Wefald
President
Public Service Commission
600 E. Boulevard, Department 408
Bismarck, North Dakota 58505-0480

RE: Proposed PrairieWinds-ND1 115 MW Wind Turbine Generation Facility near Minot, North Dakota

Dear Ms. Wefald:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) is serving as the lead Federal agency responsible for compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the proposed wind turbine generation facility referred to as the Prairie Winds - ND1 Project, to be located near Minot, North Dakota. Basin Electric Power Cooperative (BEPCO), headquartered in Bismarck, North Dakota, proposes to construct a 77-turbine, 115 megawatt (MW) facility which will tie to an existing Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) line and new substation. The Project would include seventy-seven (77) 1.5 MW wind turbine generators. Power from the facility would be supplied to Basin Electric's customers through an interconnection with the Integrated System (IS) of which WAPA is the control area operator.

A RUS funding decision must consider potential environmental impacts of the proposed project under the National Environmental Policy Act and other laws and regulations. Per RUS's NEPA implementing regulations at 7 CFR 1794.24, the BEPCO proposal requires preparation of an Environmental Assessment (EA) with scoping. RUS has agreed to be the lead agency for preparation of the EA. The Western Area Power Administration is a cooperating agency with RUS in preparation of the EA.

Enclosed for your review and comment is a copy of the Alternative Evaluation and Site Selection Study prepared for the Prairie Winds ND-1 Wind Project. We would appreciate receiving your comments within 30 days of receipt of this document.

A public scoping meeting will be held on April 3, 2008, from 4:00 PM to 7:00 PM Central Standard Time, at the North Central Research Extension Center, 5400 Highway 83 South, Minot North Dakota 58701. Representatives from RUS, WAPA, and Basin Electric will be available to discuss the planning process for the project, answer questions and take comments.

1400 Independence Ave, SW • Washington, DC 20250-0700
Web: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov>

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Letter Notice of Scoping Meeting

Pages: 2

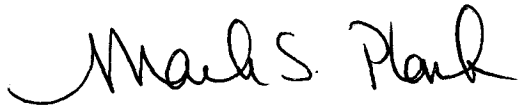
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United States Department of Agriculture

Mark Plank

Questions should be directed to Ms. Barbara Britton, Environmental Protection Specialist, RUS, Engineering and Environmental Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Stop 1571, Washington, D.C. 20250-1571, telephone (202) 720-1414, fax (202)720-0820, e-mail: barbara.britton@wdc.usda.gov, or Mr. Kevin Solie, Basin Electric Power Cooperative, 1717 E. Interstate Avenue, Bismarck, ND, 58503-0564, telephone 701-355-5495, fax 701-255-5144, e-mail: ksolie@bepc.com.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark S. Plank". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "M".

MARK S. PLANK
Director
Engineering and Environmental Staff
USDA, Rural Development, Utilities Programs

Enclosure