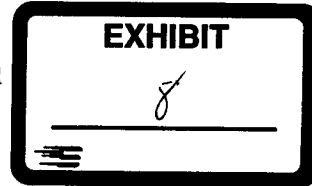




United States Department of the Interior

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ecological Services
3425 Miriam Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota 58501



Thank you for this opportunity to provide testimony on this proposed project. My name is Terry Ellsworth. I am a Fish and Wildlife Biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Ecological Services Division, in Bismarck, North Dakota. The United States Congress has directed the Fish and Wildlife Service to administer a number of laws and regulations designed to protect the nation's fish and wildlife resources for the continuing enjoyment by the American people. These laws include the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, the Endangered Species Act, and the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act.

The Fish and Wildlife Service supports the responsible development of renewable, sustainable energy sources, including wind energy. Wind energy is non-polluting, uses little, if any water, contributes to our Nation's energy independence, and provides jobs and economic benefits to local communities. All forms of energy development, including wind, have the potential to impact fish and wildlife and their habitats. In general, the wildlife resources and issues that warrant consideration during project planning for wind power include: migratory birds and bats (e.g., potential for habitat fragmentation, collisions and electrocutions); Federal land interests; wetland, prairie, and woodland habitats; and threatened and endangered species, as well as monitoring, research, and assessment. The Fish and Wildlife Service has been working cooperatively with Basin Electric, Rural Utilities Service, and Western Area Power Administration for over a year to provide technical assistance to avoid, reduce, and mitigate potential impacts to fish and wildlife resources that may be adversely affected by the proposed wind development project.

Among other issues, the Fish and Wildlife Service is concerned with wind power development in North Dakota due to the potential impact to endangered whooping cranes as they migrate through our state. There is a risk of direct mortality from collision with turbines and transmission lines, as well as the indirect impact from loss or avoidance of suitable migration stopover habitat due to the placement of wind energy facilities in the whooping crane migration corridor. Basin Electric, Rural Utilities Service and Western Area Power Administration are currently evaluating three potential wind energy development sites as part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Environmental Assessment process. All three sites under consideration contain suitable whooping crane migration stopover habitat. The Fish and Wildlife Service has been in consultation with Basin Electric and USDA to develop conservation measures that can be incorporated into the project to reduce and off-set potential impacts to the whooping crane and other threatened and endangered species from construction and operation of the PrairieWinds ND1 Project. Although the USDA's review process is still ongoing, and final decisions have yet to be made, we would like to take this opportunity to commend Basin Electric for their cooperation with our agency in seeking ways to proceed with their project in an environmentally responsible way.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed Basin Electric PrairieWinds ND1 wind power project.

Pages: 1
Filed: 6/8/2009
Exhibit 8 from May 26, 2009 Hearing