

# Reclamation and Revegetation

## Inspection Report

Clean Energy #1 Wind Project

ALLETE Clean Energy, Inc.

ND PSC Case No. PU-11-662

**Prepared for:**

North Dakota Public Service Commission  
Public Utilities Division  
State Capitol  
600 East Boulevard – Dept. 408  
Bismarck, ND 58505-0480



November 2023

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## Executive Summary

The State of North Dakota, acting through its North Dakota Public Service Commission (Commission), Division of Public Utilities, has contracted Keitu Engineers & Consultants, Inc. (Keitu) to perform consulting services for a Reclamation and Revegetation Inspection. This report addresses the Orders established by the Commission and issues established in Case No. PU-11-662.

The Clean Energy #1 Wind Project (Project) encompasses approximately 12,000 acres in Morton and Mercer counties in North Dakota. The Project can generate up to 100 megawatts of electricity, utilizing up to 43 wind turbines for power generation. Associated permanent facilities include access roads, an electrical collection system and one meteorological tower. Construction for the Project began in December of 2015 and was completed in December of 2019. The purpose of the Reclamation Inspection was to ensure the Project area, unless specified, is reclaimed back to preconstruction conditions or as close as possible. Prior to the inspection, Keitu reviewed all Project documents to verify any and all aspects requiring site verification.

The site was visually inspected on November 8, 2023 by Keitu staff. It appears to be returned as near as practical to preconstruction conditions at the time of visit.

Overall, the project was very well-maintained, secured, and in good condition. Keitu listed an item to be addressed at the Commission's discretion in the Recommendations section of this report. If the recommendation is followed, the Project should continue to be as near as practical to pre-construction conditions.

## Introduction

The Project was approved in April, 2012 and construction began in November, 2018. Construction for the Project was completed in December, 2019 and is operated by ALLETE Clean Energy (ACE). The Project consists of 43 wind turbine generators totaling approximately 106 MW of generating capacity. The Project is under the jurisdiction of the North Dakota Public Service Commission, which issued its Certificate of Site Compatibility for Energy Conversion Facility, Third Amended Certificate #30 and Permit for Case No. PU-11-662 on April 11, 2019. ACE also operates half of a 230 kv substations which acts as a generator outlet for the wind farm.

## Purpose and Scope of Inspection

The North Dakota Energy Conversion and Transmission Facility Act (North Dakota Century Code Chapter 49-22) authorizes the Public Service Commission to determine that the location, construction, and operation of jurisdictional energy conversion and transmission facilities will produce minimal adverse effects on the environment and welfare of the citizens of North Dakota. Construction Inspections ensure the Project is constructed in compliance with siting laws, rules, and the applicable Commission Order Amending Certificate and Permit (Order).

The Commission retained Keitu Engineers & Consultants, Inc. (Keitu) to complete a Reclamation and Revegetation Inspection of the Project. The inspection process included a review of the Consolidated Application for Certificate of Corridor Compatibility and Route Permit (Application), Order, Certification Relating to Order Provisions (Certification), and other applicable documents to determine Project-specific siting and construction requirements; a site visit and inspection of facilities; documentation of compliance; and a report summarizing findings. This report includes, but is not limited to, site visit observations, documentation of compliance deficiencies, and a summary site conditions.

## Methods

Keitu reviewed North Dakota siting laws and rules, the Application, Certification, and the Order for the Project to identify what Project-specific documentation was required for compliance. Keitu then reviewed Project documents in the PSC Online Case Search to identify those siting laws, rules, and Application and Order assertions that already had written verification, those that still required documentation, and those that required physical site verification.

Keitu staff visited the Project area on November 8, 2023 to visually inspect the site. Digital photographs were taken showing typical Project infrastructure. The Project was in operation at the time of visit.

## As-Built Inspection Follow-Up

An As-Built inspection was conducted on September 10, 2020 by Keitu Staff. During this inspection it was deemed by Keitu staff that the Project was constructed in compliance with the siting laws, siting rules, and applicable Commission Orders.

At the time of the as-built inspection no electronic or paper copy of the design specifications for the construction of the energy conversion facility showing the location of the energy conversion facility as built has been submitted. These documents were submitted to the ND PSC on July 6, 2021.

## Observations

Project areas occurring in crop lands appeared to be returned to pre-construction conditions at the time of visit. Crop density appeared to be similar to areas adjacent to the Project area. Portions of the Project occurring in range or pasture land had approximately 80-100% ground cover, but were mostly weeds and nonnative species. Even though they were undesirable species, the disturbed areas appeared to be stabilized.

The Keitu staff was approached by a landowner, when the landowner learned what Keitu staff was doing in the area, they offered up the following comments:

*Reclamation is pretty good but a lot of weeds and erosion in some areas was starting to effect the area.*

Erosion was noticeable on some of the access roads.

## Recommendations

1. Continual maintenance should be done to encourage the revegetation of desirable species.
2. Any areas of erosion noted during routine maintenance or visits should be noted and corrected.

## Conclusion

Overall, the Project appeared to be constructed as designed with minimal impacts to the surrounding environment. The Project site is in good condition and is well maintained. The Project's ground cover is as near as practical to preconstruction conditions, but some areas are populated with undesirable plant species and some erosion occurring on access roads.

## Management Review

The services performed by Keitu and its staff for this project have been conducted in a manner consistent with the degree of care and technical skill appropriately exercised by professionals currently practicing in this area under similar time and budget constraints.

Recommendations and findings contained in this report represent our professional judgment and are based upon available information and technically accepted practices at the present time and location. Other than this, no warranty is implied or expressed.



11/17/2023

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Jaimee Antognazzi, Operations Manager

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Date

**Report Photo #1:** Yard



**Report Photo #2:** Some Weedy Vegetation at T32



**Report Photo #3:** Established in Cropland at T7



**Report Photo #4:** Some Undesirable Vegetation at T8



**Report Photo #5:** In Field at T34



**Report Photo #6:** Road Erosion Example



**Project Photo Location Map:**

