



**Department of Energy**  
Western Area Power Administration  
Upper Great Plains Region  
P.O. Box 35800  
Billings, MT 59107-5800

**APR 18 2007**

B0401.BL

Subject: Wessington Springs Wind Project In Jerauld County, South Dakota

Dear Interested Party:

Babcock & Brown Renewable Holdings Inc. proposes to construct, operate, and maintain a wind energy development south of the city of Wessington Springs in southern Jerauld County, South Dakota (refer to the enclosed map). The proposed project, known as the Wessington Springs Wind Project (Project), would provide clean, reliable, competitive electrical power into the interconnected grid of the western United States, and accommodate future demand for power in South Dakota and the region

The owners of the proposed Project have requested an interconnection with Western Area Power Administration's (Western) transmission system. This interconnection request triggers a Federal National Environmental Policy Act review. Before Western can agree to the construction and interconnection of the proposed Project, we must consider the Project's potential environmental impacts.

This letter serves as Western's notification of plans to prepare an environmental assessment (EA). The EA will provide Western with a framework to analyze and judge the magnitude of environmental impacts. If Western finds that there are no significant environmental impacts, we can issue a "finding of no significant impact" and move forward with the proposed Project. If the EA process identifies likely unmitigated significant impacts, an environmental impact statement (EIS) process will be initiated to take a more detailed look at the impacts and alternative approaches to the proposed Project..

In the proposed Project's first phase, approximately 34 three-bladed wind turbine generators (WTGs), up to 1.5 megawatts (MW) each, would be constructed on private leased land. A future phase of the Project would install and operate up to 32 more WTGs on private leased land. The proposed Project, when complete, would produce approximately 99 MW of net electrical output . However, the average annual output of the proposed Project would not exceed 50 average MW. The proposed Project would be located on approximately 6,000 acres of leased land

The GE 1.5sle turbine or equivalent is the preliminary turbine choice for the proposed Project. It is anticipated that each WTG would be 262 feet high at its hub, would have a rotor diameter of 252 feet, and would have a tip height (with a blade in the vertical position) of 389 feet. Each WTG would have a base diameter of 15 feet and a pad measuring about 150 feet by 180 feet (0.6 acre).

Some access to the proposed Project area is currently available along county township roads. Additional access roads would be constructed as necessary. Each WTG would be connected by a service road having a permanent width of 16 feet and a temporary width during construction of 35 feet.

Each WTG would be connected by an underground 34.5 kilovolt (kV) electrical collection system to a collector step-up substation with a 34.5-230 kV transformer. Trenching would require an area temporarily cleared of vegetation about 30 feet wide, but the actual trench would only need to be wide enough to install underground cable.

The proposed Project would interconnect with the existing Fort Thompson-to-Sioux Falls 230-kV Transmission Line, owned by Western, that runs through the southern portion of the Project site. The interconnection would consist of a substation constructed and owned by Western near the existing transmission lines. The proposed Project would also include an overhead transmission line to the location of the collector station that would be constructed and owned by Babcock and Brown. Construction of the interconnection station would disturb an area of approximately 250 feet by 250 feet (1.4 acres). The location of the interconnection substation has not been selected, and its location would determine the length of Babcock and Brown's transmission line. The transmission line would likely be less than 2.5 miles long and would have a right-of-way width of 100 feet.

Public involvement is an important and integral part of Western's NEPA process. Scoping involves actively acquiring input from interested Federal, state, tribal and local agencies and the public. Information gained during scoping assists Western in identifying potential environmental issues, alternatives, and mitigation measures associated with constructing and operating the proposed Project. Scoping also helps narrow the scope of issues so the analysis of environmental impacts can focus on areas of high interest and concern.

Western will hold a scoping period to ensure that interested members of the public, potentially affected landowners and lessees, and Federal, state, local, and tribal agencies have an opportunity to provide input on the scope of the EA and the alternatives that will be addressed in the EA. Western will also hold a public open-house scoping meeting near the proposed Project area during the scoping period. Western staff at the scoping meeting will provide information about the proposed Project, answer questions, and take verbal and written comments from interested parties. Western wants you to comment on the proposal, offer suggestions to improve the proposal, and even suggest alternative actions. Western is also asking you to identify any issues of concern about potential environmental impacts.

The open-house public scoping meeting will be held at the Jerauld County 4-H AG Building in Wessington Springs, South Dakota, on May 17, 2007. You may attend any time between 5 and 8 p.m. The 4-H AG Building is located at 604 2<sup>nd</sup> Street, NE in Wessington Springs. You will have the opportunity to view proposed Project and NEPA process displays and other information. The open-house scoping meeting will be very informal, with Western and Babcock and Brown representatives available for one-on-one discussions with attendees. Written comments may be left with one of Western's representatives at the scoping meeting, or may be provided by fax, e-mail, or the U.S. Postal Service to Matt Marsh, or by mailing the enclosed addressed response sheet.

If you wish to be added to the Project's mailing list and/or receive a copy of the Draft EA, please return the response sheet or contact Matt Marsh at the phone number or address listed below. Comments on the Project scope and alternatives should be received by May 31, 2007, to be considered in defining the scope for the EA. Comments on the proposed Project will be accepted and considered throughout the NEPA process.

If Western determines that an EIS is necessary at any time in the course of preparing the EA, Western will use the issues and alternatives identified during the EA scoping process in preparing the EIS, including input and comments received at the Data Response/Issues Resolution Workshop and subsequent workshops held for the Project. If it is decided that an EIS will be prepared, Western will publish a Notice of Intent to Prepare an EIS in the Federal Register and invite further comments.

If you have any questions, concerns or comments, please contact me at the following:

Matt Marsh, Environmental Protection Specialist  
Upper Great Plains Region, Western Area Power Administration,  
P.O. Box 35800  
Billings, MT 59107-5800  
Phone: 1-800-358-3415  
Fax: 406-247-7408  
E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Marsh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Matt Marsh  
Project Manager

## **Western needs your input to identify issues and concerns for the proposed Wessington Springs Wind Project EA**

If you have any issues, concerns, or questions that you would like addressed in the Wessington Springs Wind Project Environmental Assessment, please complete this response sheet, put it in the enclosed stamped envelope, and drop it in the mail to us—no postage needed. If you prefer, give us a call at 1-800-358-3415.

Please tell us about the issues, concerns, or questions you want answered in the space provided below or on the back of this paper. Send additional concerns, issues, or questions to Matt Marsh, Environmental Protection Specialist, Upper Great Plains Region, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 35800, Billings, Montana 59107-5800, Fax: (406) 247-7408, E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov)

### **Share your issues, concerns, or questions with us:**

#### **Our mailing list**

To have your name added or removed from our mailing list for this Project, please check the appropriate box and return this response sheet to us. If you do not ask us to remove your name from our mailing list, we'll send you future EA-related announcements.

Yes, add my name to the mailing list to receive future information

No, please remove my name from your mailing list

#### **Sign up to receive the EA for Review**

Please also let us know if you would like to receive a copy of the Draft Environmental Assessment for Pre-Approval Review when it is available.

Send me the Draft EA for review

#### **Tell us how to reach you**

Please give us your name, address, phone, fax, and e-mail, so we can keep you up-to-date about this project.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Contact Us**

For more information, contact Mr. Matt Marsh, Western Area Power Administration, Phone: 1-800-358-3415, E-mail: [mmarsh@wapa.gov](mailto:mmarsh@wapa.gov)