



Wyoming  
DEPARTMENT OF Agriculture

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Jason Fearneyhough, *Director*  
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*The Wyoming Department of Agriculture is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.*

February 26, 2010

Mark Wieringa  
Western Area Power Administration  
Corporate Services Office  
P.O. Box 281213  
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213

Dear Mr. Wieringa:

Following are the comments of the Wyoming Department of Agriculture (WDA) on the Scoping Notice regarding the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) proposed for the Hermosa West Wind Energy Project to be located near Tie Siding, Wyoming.

Our comments are specific to our mission: to be dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposed project affects our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, it's important you continue to inform us of proposed actions and decisions and provide us the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

The WDA supports responsible wind energy development that empowers private landowners to develop and implement renewable energy in ways that sustain the environment, forage for livestock & wildlife, hunting opportunities, open space, and local economies while protecting private property rights. However, this proposed project has the potential to impact agriculture producers and landowners, as well as our natural resources, both in and near the proposed 11,125 acre project area.

The Scoping Notice fails to identify any of the potential impacts to livestock grazing and surface disturbance. The following are specific negative impacts upon livestock grazing needing analyzed in the EIS: increased off- and on-road traffic, increased number of speeding vehicles, construction of new roads and modifications to existing roads, increased number of vehicles in the area causing death or impairments of livestock, cut fences, opened gates, damaged range improvements, decreased forage, decreased palatability of vegetation and forage from road dust and development activities, unsuccessful reclamation of disturbed areas, introduction and spread of noxious weeds and other detrimental social and economic impacts on livestock management operations.

The Scoping Notice lacks specific details of the project, such as acres of surface disturbance, construction schedule, etc. The total number of acres disturbed for both temporary impacts and permanent impacts is not identified in the Scoping Notice. This information is extremely valuable for evaluating the potential significance of the surface disturbing activities. The WDA requests more details regarding construction schedule or a completion date for the project. We support phased development, as long as the development is well planned and attempts to minimize impacts to all resources. We suggest installation of all the main infrastructure facilities for the project area occur in the first phase of development, so mitigation and reclamation can begin immediately along roads and other impacted areas. This would reduce future impacts on new development areas and reclaim areas for use by livestock grazing operations sooner. Lastly, the Scoping Notice fails to mention the operation and maintenance (O&M) activities occurring during the life of the project. The O&M

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activities would create impacts throughout the life of the project and need to be included in the analysis for the EIS.

The WDA supports private landowner's right to choose to have wind energy projects developed on their private lands, however, we strongly encourage Western Area Power Administration officials keep landowners and surrounding landowners informed of project details and cooperatively work with them, learn their concerns and listen to their recommendations regarding impacts the proposed project will have on the resources and operations. Agriculture producers are intimately familiar with areas affected by this proposal and they possess irreplaceable long-term, on-the-ground knowledge. They are particularly aware of both the individual and cumulative impacts upon wildlife, livestock, and rangeland health for the planning area. It is imperative Western Area Power Administration and Shell WindEnergy Inc. coordinate with all landowners who are directly or indirectly affected by the issues, decisions, and resulting actions regarding this proposal as early in the planning process as possible, including participation in developing mitigation and reclamation plans.

We insist timely and successful mitigation and reclamation occur for the proposed project. It is imperative to reclaim new and temporary roads and disturbed areas. This includes the monitoring and eradication of undesirable weeds in all disturbed areas until desired vegetation is established. The final decision must ensure successful mitigation and reclamation occurs for all impacts.

In conclusion, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the Scoping Notice for the proposed wind energy project. We encourage continued attention to our concerns and we look forward to hearing about and being involved in future proposed actions and decisions.

Sincerely,



Jason Fearneyhough  
Director

JF/cw

CC: Governor's Planning Office  
Wyoming Game and Fish Department  
Wyoming Board of Agriculture  
Wyoming Stock Growers Association  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association  
Wyoming Farm Bureau Federation  
Wyoming Association of Conservation Districts  
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