



Department of Energy

Golden Field Office
1617 Cole Boulevard
Golden, Colorado 80401-3393

April 9, 2009

DOE/EA 1648

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT FOR THE WHITE EARTH NATION WIND ENERGY PROJECT BECKER COUNTY, MINNESOTA

AGENCY: Department of Energy, Golden Field Office

ACTION: Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) that analyzed the potential impacts associated with the construction and operation of a proposed wind turbine located on tribal trust land near the tribal village of White Earth in Becker County, Minnesota.

DOE, through its Golden Field Office, proposes to provide congressionally directed federal funding to the White Earth Nation in support of their proposed installation, construction, and operation of a single low-speed wind turbine and associated facilities. The project would generate electricity for the White Earth Nation and offset the Reservation's overall consumption of fossil fuels with renewable wind power. All discussion, analysis and findings related to the potential impacts of the project are contained in the Final EA. The Final EA is hereby incorporated by reference.

The proposed action would consist of a single 750-kW to 1.0-MW wind turbine. Two units are under consideration; the 750-kW Heron or the 1-MW Nordic. These turbines are, respectively, 256 feet and 230 feet in height at the blade hub and have 197-foot and 194-foot blade sweep diameters. A transformer and meter box would be placed on a pad within a few feet of the turbine base. The proposed turbine and associated transformer and metal box would occupy an approximately 100 x 150 foot (0.25 acre) area. Electric power from the wind turbine would be routed underground and follow existing rights-of-way as much as possible to a nearby electrical substation, the MinnKota substation, located less than one mile to the northwest of the proposed location.

The project would be located on a parcel between the tribal headquarters building to the east and the villages' sewer lagoons to the west. This parcel is also surrounded by the fire department building, Head Start building, and a senior living facility. A 40-meter meteorological tower is



currently located approximately 200 feet north of the proposed turbine site to monitor wind characteristics for the project.

An approximately 400 x 350 foot (3.2 acres) area (referred to as the laydown area) would be temporarily needed for construction. The laydown area would be used for crane maneuvering and temporary storage of tower components between arrival and assembly. An unpaved access road, approximately 400 feet in length by 10 feet wide (0.1 acre), would lead to the turbine site from the existing Eagle View Road. The turnout off Eagle View Road and a rough trail leading to the proposed turbine site are already in place. This trail would be upgraded for the access road.

In accordance with applicable regulations and policies, DOE sent scoping notices to potentially interested federal, state, and local agencies, tribal representatives, businesses, and individuals, and published the notice in the local *Anishinaabeg Today* newspaper. The scoping letters described the Proposed Action and requested assistance in identifying potential issues that could be evaluated in the EA. In response to the scoping notice, DOE received comments from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of Health and Human Services Indian Health Services, Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Department of Agriculture Natural Resource Conservation Service. The agencies did not object to the project, but raised general concerns about wildlife, siting, and archaeological resources; asked questions about the project; and provided information for use in the EA. Final siting of the turbine was made in response to the concerns expressed, specific questions raised were addressed in the EA, and information provided by agencies was used in the impact analysis.

DOE sent notices announcing the availability of the Draft EA for public comment to the same agencies, representatives, businesses, and individuals as received the scoping notice. The Draft EA was also made available for public review and comment on the DOE Golden Field Office reading room website. One public comment was received. This comment was provided by the manager of the Biimaadiiziiwiin Senior Apartments located west of the proposed project site and it expressed his concern over the noise factor that could potentially disturb the tranquility of the residents when the turbine is in operation. This comment is addressed in the Final EA.

DETERMINATION: DOE determines that providing funding to support the construction and operation of the proposed wind turbine on the White Earth Nation tribal trust land near the tribal village of White Earth in Becker County, Minnesota, would not constitute a major Federal Action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment, as defined by the National Environmental Policy Act. The applicant-committed environmental protection measures identified in the Final EA shall be incorporated and enforceable through DOE's funding award to the White Earth Nation. The measures include having a staff archaeologist on site during all excavation activities who will coordinate with the Tribe and State Historic Preservation Officer if cultural resources are discovered; enacting specific actions to minimize noise, air, visual, and health and safety impacts during construction and operation; providing erosion and sediment control during construction; obtaining and complying with a NPDES permit; prohibiting off-road travel or access outside the cleared work areas; co-locating utility lines underground; reclaiming areas disturbed during construction including noxious weed control; and monitoring post-construction bird and bat fatalities.

The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required and DOE is issuing this Finding of No Significant Impact.

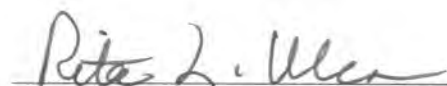
Copies of the Final EA are available at the DOE Golden Field Office Public Reading Room website at http://www.eere.energy.gov/golden/Reading_Room.aspx, or from:

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