

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT
IMPACT FOR THE
CAMPBELL COUNTY WIND FARM
CAMPBELL COUNTY, SOUTH DAKOTA
DOE/EA-1955**

AGENCY: U.S. Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration

ACTION: Approval of Environmental Assessment and Issuance of Finding of No Significant Impact

SUMMARY: In January 2010, Dakota Plains Energy, Inc. (Dakota Plains) submitted an interconnection request to the Western Area Power Administration (Western) to connect its proposed Campbell County Wind Farm (Project) to Western's Bismarck-Glenham 230kV transmission line, via a new interconnection switchyard to be constructed approximately 10 miles south-southeast of Pollock, South Dakota.

Under its Open Access Transmission Tariff (OATT), Western is required to respond to Dakota Plains Energy's interconnection request. Western's Tariff conforms to section 211 of the Federal Power Act and Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Final Orders addressing non-discriminatory transmission system access. Western's Tariff provides for new interconnections to Western's transmission system by all eligible entities, consistent with, and subject to environmental review under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and other environmental regulations. Under its Tariff, Western must offer access to capacity on its transmission system when capacity is available, on a non-discriminatory basis. Western also needs to ensure that by offering such capacity, existing transmission system reliability and service is not degraded by new interconnections.

In accordance with applicable regulations, Western prepared an environmental assessment (EA) entitled Campbell County Wind Farm Final Environmental Assessment (DOE/EA-1955). Western's purpose and need is to consider the interconnection request in accordance with its Tariff. Western's proposed Federal action is to 1) execute an interconnection agreement to connect the proposed Project to Western's Bismarck-Glenham 230kV transmission line, and 2) to construct and operate a new interconnection switchyard to which the Project would connect to the regional transmission system.

Western's Federal action does not include Dakota Plains Energy's proposed Project, which would be constructed, owned, operated, and maintained by Campbell County Wind Farm Inc. LLC, (CCW) and is subject to South Dakota's statewide utility siting authority approval. However, Western's EA analyzed and disclosed the potential environmental impacts of CCW's proposed Project including the potential location for the new switchyard, access road, and upgrades to the transmission system. The EA identified no significant impacts to environmental resources resulting from either Western's Federal action or CCW's proposed Project.

Based on the information contained in the EA, Western's Federal action would not result in significant environmental impacts. Western has determined that its action to execute an interconnection agreement with CCW to connect the proposed Project to Western's Bismarck-Glenham transmission line and to construct and operate a new interconnection switchyard, does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required, and Western is issuing this finding of no significant impact (FONSI). The final EA is approved concurrently with this FONSI.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT: Additional information and copies of the EA and this FONSI are available to all interested parties and the public from the following contact:

Micah Reuber, Upper Great Plains NEPA Coordinator
Western Area Power Administration
Upper Great Plains Customer Service Office
PO Box 35800
Billings, MT 59107
reuber@wapa.gov
Phone: (406) 255-2811 or (800) 358-3415

A copy of the EA and FONSI are also available at the following website:
<http://www.wapa.gov/ugp/Environment/default.htm>

For further information on the DOE NEPA process,

contact: Ms. Carol M. Borgstrom
Director, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, GC-54
U.S. Department of Energy
1000 Independence Avenue, SW. Washington, DC 20585
Phone: (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: This FONSI was prepared in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing the Procedural Provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act, 40 CFR 1508.13, and the DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures, 10 CFR 1021.322. The FONSI briefly presents the reasons why Western's proposal to execute an interconnection agreement for the CCW will not have a significant impact on the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Execution of the interconnection agreement would allow CCW to interconnect their proposed Project to Western's transmission system. Western's EA evaluated the environmental effects of Western's proposed Federal action and also included an analysis and disclosure of the potential environmental impacts of CCW's proposed Project.

CCW'S PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION: CCW proposes to construct and

operate a maximum 99 MW wind energy facility located on privately owned land south of the city of Pollock in Campbell County, South Dakota. Construction of the Project is proposed to begin in 2015 and would be completed and in operation by the end of 2016. CCW has obtained leases from the private landowners to construct and operate the Project within the Project boundary.

The proposed Project would include 55 wind turbines, with a generating capacity of 1.715 MW per turbine. Based on the wind regime at the site, the monopole tower design will have a hub height of 262 feet, and a rotor diameter of 337 feet. To allow for flexibility of turbine placement, micrositing corridors were considered and evaluated as part of CCW's proposed Project. In addition to the wind turbines, permanent support facilities at the Project would include access roads, an underground communications and electricity collection system, a collector substation, and an operations and maintenance facility. The buried collector cables would transmit electricity at 34.5 kV from each turbine to the collector substation, where the voltage would be stepped-up to the interconnection voltage of 230kV. The electricity would then be conveyed to the adjacent interconnection switchyard, to be constructed by Western; no new transmission line would be needed. A full and complete Project description is included in the EA.

ALTERNATIVES: DOE's NEPA regulations require that an EA include the proposed action and the no action alternative (10 CFR 1022.321(c)). Under the no action alternative, Western would not execute an interconnection agreement or construct a new switchyard or related transmission capacity improvements. Although a decision not to execute an interconnection agreement would not necessarily stop construction of CCW's proposed Project, Western's no action alternative assumes that CCW's proposed Project would not be constructed.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT: The EA contains specific information on notifications to tribes, landowners, members of the public, and various local, State, and Federal agencies. Public scoping meetings were held in Pollock, South Dakota, on March 12, 2013, to discuss the proposed Project, to help determine important issues, and obtain local information relevant to the proposed Project. Summaries of the meetings and copies of correspondence received are included as appendices to the EA. All correspondence is available for review at Western's Upper Great Plains Regional Office.

COMMENTS RECEIVED ON THE PRE-APPROVAL EA: The Draft Final EA was distributed to interested agencies, tribes, groups, and individuals on July 31, 2014. The public comment period ended on September 2, 2014. One response letter was received from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe Tribal Historic Preservation Office. The letter had multiple comments and questions about the project. Each of the comments and questions was addressed by Western personnel. The letter and responses can be found in Appendix G.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF WESTERN'S ACTION: The execution of an interconnection agreement with CCW's to connect the proposed Project to Western's Bismarck-Glenham transmission line and the construction of a new interconnection switchyard will have no significant impacts to environmental resources. Western received concurrence from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service on June 9, 2015, that the proposed Project would not adversely affect threatened and endangered species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Western, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the South Dakota State Historic Preservation Office, and CCW signed a Memorandum of

Agreement on June 10, 2015, documenting that there would be no significant impact to cultural resources eligible for listing under the National Historic Preservation Act.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CCW'S PROPOSED PROJECT: The EA evaluated the potential for CCW's proposed Project to impact environmental resources found in the Project area. CCW has incorporated Western's Standard Construction Practices and Best Management Practices into the description of its proposed Project. The analysis of environmental impacts identified no potential impacts that would be considered significant, and no mitigation measures that should be implemented additional to those already embedded within the proposed Project description. The principal reasons for the lack of significant environmental impact include the avoidance of sensitive resources during siting of the wind facility, the minor amount of disturbance at structure locations, and CCW's efforts to work cooperatively with affected landowners.

DETERMINATION: Based on the information contained in the EA, Western's Federal Action would not result in significant environmental impacts. Western has determined that its action to execute an interconnection agreement to connect the proposed Project to Western's Bismarck-Glenham transmission line and to construct and operate a new interconnection switchyard does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment within the meaning of NEPA. Therefore, considering the Project's avoidance and minimization measures and best management practices as described in the EA that are to be implemented over the course of the proposed Project, preparation of an environmental impact statement is not required and Western is issuing this FONSI.

Issued at Billings, Montana on June 11, 2015.



Robert J. Harris
Senior Vice President & UGP
Regional Manager