



October 9, 2014

Suzanne Steinhauer
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Minnesota Department of Commerce
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Re: Compliance Filings: Biological Inventory and Native Prairie Protection Plan
Black Oak and Getty Wind Sites
PUC Docket Number: IP6853/WS-10-1240 and IP6866/WS-11-831

The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) has reviewed compliance filings submitted by Black Oak wind, LLC and Getty Wind Company, LLC including the Biological Inventory and Native Prairie Protection Plan documents. Please consider the following comments regarding these documents:

Biological Inventory

Native Prairie Assessment

The document identifies 5 areas where the project developer “moved the infrastructure and associated disturbance limits outside of remaining potential native prairie remnant areas” (Exhibit 9a). They are all associated with “wet prairie” types, so are near wetlands. The DNR appreciates avoidance of these potential native prairie areas.

Two of these potential native prairie remnant areas (Exhibit 9b) are at the public water wetland that the DNR previously recommended for an alternate turbine location (see Turbine 9 on attached recently updated project layout map) The DNR previously commented in the attached September 29, 2014 letter regarding this location in T125N R35W S14: “Turbine 9 is adjacent to a public water wetland. The DNR encourages avoiding siting next to wetlands to decrease the collision risk to species using the wetland as habitat. This would be a reasonable turbine to consider as an alternative from a natural resources perspective.” The Native Prairie Assessment shows infrastructure and the turbine (Turbine 9) encroaching into habitat surrounding a public water wetland in a section with few habitat areas. The DNR continues to encourage avoiding this area, possibly by only using this turbine as an alternative location, or using an alternative instead of this location. Though the areas identified in this analysis as possible prairie have been avoided, moving infrastructure out of other associated habitat is also encouraged.

Native Prairie Protection Plan

This document addresses construction signage, environmental training, construction guidance, buffer widths, erosion control, construction environmental monitoring, and any needed post-construction operations coordination with DNR.

We suggest adding information under Installation/Construction addressing best management practices (BMPs) for invasive species. This project is in a primarily agricultural area with many weed species present; seeds are easily spread by large equipment tires. BMPs that limit the spread of weeds and invasive plants to areas close to potential prairie remnants should be employed. This includes control of agricultural weeds/invasives in construction zones and the potential spread by heavy equipment.

The Restoration section should include more detail. Re-vegetation/Reseeding should address the re-vegetation method. The DNR recommends, where appropriate in accordance with landowner preferences, vegetation be re-established with Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources (BWSR) approved native seed mixes suitable for the area. See the following webpage for more information: http://www.bwsr.state.mn.us/native_vegetation/

Natural Heritage Information System Update

The DNR does not recommend an updated Natural Heritage Information System review at this time.

Please contact me with any questions regarding DNR comments for the Black Oak and Getty Wind Projects Biological Inventory and Native Prairie Protection Plan.

Sincerely,



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Enclosures: 2

cc: Scott Ek, Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
Richard Davis, Minnesota Department of Commerce
Patrick Smith, Geronimo Energy