office of energy security

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In the Matter of the Application of AWA Goodhue, LLC, for a Certificate of Need for the 78 MW Goodhue Wind Project Wind in Goodhue County

ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT SCOPING DECISION PUC Docket No. IP-6701/CN-09-1186

The above matter has come before the Director of the Office of Energy Security (OES) for a decision on the content of the Environmental Report to be prepared in consideration of the AWA Goodhue, LLC, Application for a Certificate of Need for the proposed 78 Megawatt (MW) Goodhue Wind Project (Project) in Goodhue County.

The proposed Project will include up to 52 General Electric (GE) XLE 1.5 MW wind turbine generators, with a hub height of 262.5 feet (80 meters) and a rotor diameter of 271 feet (82.5 meters). In addition to the wind turbines, the Project will include gravel access roads, two meteorological towers, an electrical collection system, and junction boxes delivering power to two proposed project substations. The two substations will step-up the voltage from the 34.5 kV feeder lines to 69 kV and deliver the power on two 69 kV transmission lines, one existing and the other proposed, to the electrical grid. There will also be an operations and maintenance building.

The Project is located in southern Goodhue County west of the city of Goodhue and north of the city of Zumbrota and includes the townships of Belle Creek, Goodhue, Vasa, Minneola and Zumbrota.

The Project requires a Certificate of Need (CN) and a site permit from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission). The CN (CN-09-1186) and site permit (WS-08-1233) are under consideration by the Commission in separate dockets.

On October 15, 2009, AWA Goodhue, LLC, (Applicant) filed a CN application with the Commission for the Goodhue Wind Project. On December 30, 2009, the Commission issued an order accepting the application as complete and authorizing an informal review process. The proposed Project is a large energy facility (Minn. Stat. § 216B.2421). As such, the Office of Energy Security is required to prepare an Environmental Report for the Project (Minn. Rules 7849.1200).

On March 4, 2010, an evening meeting was held in Mazeppa, Minnesota, to receive comments on the scope of the Environmental Report and issues to be considered in developing the draft site permit. Approximately 200 people attended the meeting.

A public comment period followed the meeting, which closed on March 26, 2010. More than 110 separate written comments were received during the comment period. Concerns raised at the public meeting and in written comments included: potential impacts to property values, aesthetics, public health and safety related issues, livestock, wildlife (birds, bats, game animals and other wildlife in the project area), wildlife habitat, TV and radio reception, internet connections, GPS interference, stray voltage, loss of productive agricultural land, radar facilities, the Prairie Island nuclear facility, private landing strips, Mayo One emergency medical helicopter service, aerial crop applications, population density, setbacks, shadow flicker, noise (audible and infrasound) as a result turbine installation, quality of life issues, water quality, road damages and turbine lighting. Other comments raised concerns regarding the need for wind energy and suggested other fuel types, such as solar, nuclear, biomass, hydropower, and methane digesters and locating the proposed facilities elsewhere.

The proposed Project is intended to produce renewable energy in furtherance of Minnesota's renewable energy objectives. Accordingly, alternatives examined in the ER will be limited to "eligible energy technologies" that support these objectives (Minn. Stat. 216B.1691). These alternatives include: (1) a generic 78 MW wind generation project sited elsewhere in Minnesota, (2) a 30 MW biomass plant, (3) a "no-build" option, and (4) alternative renewable technologies. An Environmental Report provides an environmental analysis of the proposed Project and system alternatives, and reviews environmental impacts associated with named and alternative projects. It is only one part of a larger OES investigation of the CN application. The OES in its overall review will address all the issues and alternatives required by rule.

Having reviewed the matter, consulted with the OES Energy Facility Permitting staff, and in accordance with Minnesota Rules 7849.1400 and 7849.1500, I hereby make the following scoping decision:

MATTERS TO BE ADDRESSED

The Environmental Report for the AWA Goodhue, LLC, Goodhue Wind Project will address and provide information on the following matters:

1.0 Description of the Goodhue Wind Project [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, A]

2.0 Regulatory Framework

3.0 Description of Alternatives [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, B]

- 3.1 Generic 78 MW wind project
- 3.2 A 30 MW biomass plant
- 3.3 No-build option
- 3.4 Alternative renewable technologies

4.0 Feasibility and Availability of Alternatives [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp 1, F]

4.1 Goodhue Wind Project
4.2 Generic 78 MW wind project
4.3 A 30 MW biomass plant
4.4 No-build alternative
4.5 Alternative renewable technologies

5.0 Human and Environmental Impacts and Mitigation [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp 1, C, D and E]

5.1 Emissions – pollutants [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, A]
5.2 Emissions – hazardous air pollutants [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, B]
5.3 Aesthetic impact and visibility impairment [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, C]
  5.3.1 Shadow flicker
  5.3.2 Viewshed
  5.3.3 Turbine lighting
5.4 Ozone formation [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, D]
5.5 Fuel availability [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp 2, E]
5.6 Associated transmission facilities [Minn. Rule 7949.1500, subp. 2, F]
5.7 Water appropriations [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, G]
5.8 Wastewater [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, H]
5.9 Solid and hazardous wastes [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, I]
5.10 Noise [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, J]
5.11 Property values
5.12 Communication signals
5.13 Wildlife and domestic animals
5.14 Natural Environment (topography, flora, fauna)
5.15 Aviation

6.0 Required Permits [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1 G]

ISSUES OUTSIDE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT

The Environmental Report will not consider the following matters:

1. Impacts or mitigative measures associated with specific sites, including specific tower or road locations for the proposed Project and alternatives.

2. The negotiation and content of easement agreements by which land owners are paid for property rights, including wind rights.

3. Any alternatives not specifically described in this scoping decision

SCHEDULE

The Environmental Report will be completed in June 2010. A public hearing will be held in or near the Project area before an Administrative Law Judge after the Environmental Report has been issued and notice served.

Signed this 27th day of May, 2010

STATE OF MINNESOTA
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
OFFICE OF ENERGY SECURITY

/s/ WILLIAM GLAHN, Director