



**In the Matter of the Application by  
Prairie Wind Energy LLC, for  
a Certificate of Need for the  
100 MW Prairie Wind Energy Project  
in Otter Tail County**

**ENVIRONMENTAL REPORT  
SCOPING DECISION  
PUC Docket No. IP-6844/CN-10-429**

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The above matter has come before the Department of Commerce for a decision on the content of the Environmental Report (ER) to be prepared in consideration of the Prairie Wind Energy LLC, Application for a Certificate of Need (CN) for the proposed 100 Megawatt (MW) Prairie Wind Energy Project in Otter Tail County.

A final decision on turbine selection and design has not been made, but the project will consist of turbines with a rated capacity between 2.3 and 2.4 MW in such number and combination as to yield up to 100 MW. Facilities associated with the project include gravel access roads, an operation and maintenance building, meteorological towers, a Sonic Detection and Ranging (SODAR) unit, and an electrical collection system.

The Project is located in Otter Tail County approximately one mile from the community of Parkers Prairie, west of State Highway (SH) 29 and north of SH 235, with most of the Project site in the townships of Parkers Prairie and Elmo. Other townships within the Project site include Effington and Folden, also in Otter Tail County. There are currently 23,921 acres within the Project boundary, with approximately 8,000 acres under site control. Electricity from the Project would be delivered into the Graven Substation and distributed using the existing 115 kV transmission line that traverses the Project.

The project requires a Certificate of Need and a Site Permit for the wind farm from the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission). The CN (CN-10-429) and the site permit (WS-10-438) are being considered by the Commission in separate dockets.

On November 29, 2010, Prairie Wind Energy, LLC, filed a certificate of need application with the Commission for the Prairie Wind Energy Project. On February 11, 2011, the Commission issued an order accepting the application as complete and authorizing an informal review process. The proposed project is a large wind energy facility (Minn. Stat. § 216B.2421). As such, it requires the Minnesota Department of Commerce to prepare an environmental report for the project (Minn. Rules 7849.1200).

A public meeting was held on April 19, 2011, in Parkers Prairie to receive comments on the scope of the environmental report. Approximately 150 persons attended the meeting, with

nine people commenting. A public comment period followed the meeting, closing on May 10, 2011. Thirty comments from 26 people were received during the comment period.

Concerns that were raised at the public meeting and in written comments were potential impacts to property values and local tax implications, impact on farm land, aerial crop applications and easements for associated collector lines. Questions were raised concerning setbacks from property lines, aesthetics, wildlife, and wildlife habitat. Impacts from noise, shadow flicker, stray voltage, and electric and magnetic fields were also raised. A number of people questioned the state requirement for renewable energy projects and the potential increase in energy costs to the consumer. Other commentors welcomed the potential economic, tax and employment benefits.

Of these concerns, issues not specifically addressed elsewhere will be reviewed in Section 3.11.

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 100 MW wind generation project sited elsewhere in Minnesota, (2) a 38.5 MW biomass plant, and (3) a "no-build" option. An ER provides a high level environmental analysis of the proposed Project and system alternatives, and reviews environmental impacts associated with named and alternative projects. It is a part of a larger Public Utilities Commission investigation of the Certificate of Need Application. The Commission in its overall review will address all the issues and alternatives required by rule.

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Having reviewed the matter, consulted with the 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**

### **Prairie Wind Energy Project**

- 1.0 Project Description [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, A]**
- 2.0 Alternatives to be Evaluated [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, B]**
  - 2.1 No-build Alternative
  - 2.2 A Generic 100 MW Wind Project
  - 2.3 A 38.5 MW Biomass Plant

**3.0 Human and Environmental Impacts [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, C, D]**

- 3.1 Emissions [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, A]
- 3.2 Hazardous air pollutants and VOCs [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, B]
- 3.3 Visibility impairment (including aesthetic and shadow flicker) [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, C]
- 3.4 Ozone formation [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, D]
- 3.5 Fuel availability and delivery [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, E]
- 3.6 Associated transmission facilities [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, F]
- 3.7 Water appropriations [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, G]
- 3.8 Wastewater [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, H]
- 3.9 Solid and hazardous wastes [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, I]
- 3.10 Noise [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 2, J]
- 3.11 Other Issues, including effects on Real Estate, Wireless Broadband Internet and Aerial Spraying

**4.0 Mitigation measures [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, E]**

- 4.1 No-build alternative
- 4.2 100 MW wind project
- 4.3 38.5 MW biomass plant
- 4.4 Prairie Wind Energy Project

**5.0 Feasibility and availability of alternatives [Minn. Rule 7849.1500, subp. 1, F]**

- 5.1 No-build alternative
- 5.2 100 MW wind project
- 5.3 38.5 MW biomass plant
- 5.4 Prairie Wind Energy Project

**6.0 A list of permits required for the project. [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 July 2011. A public hearing will be held in the project area before an Administrative Law Judge after the environmental report has been issued and notice served.

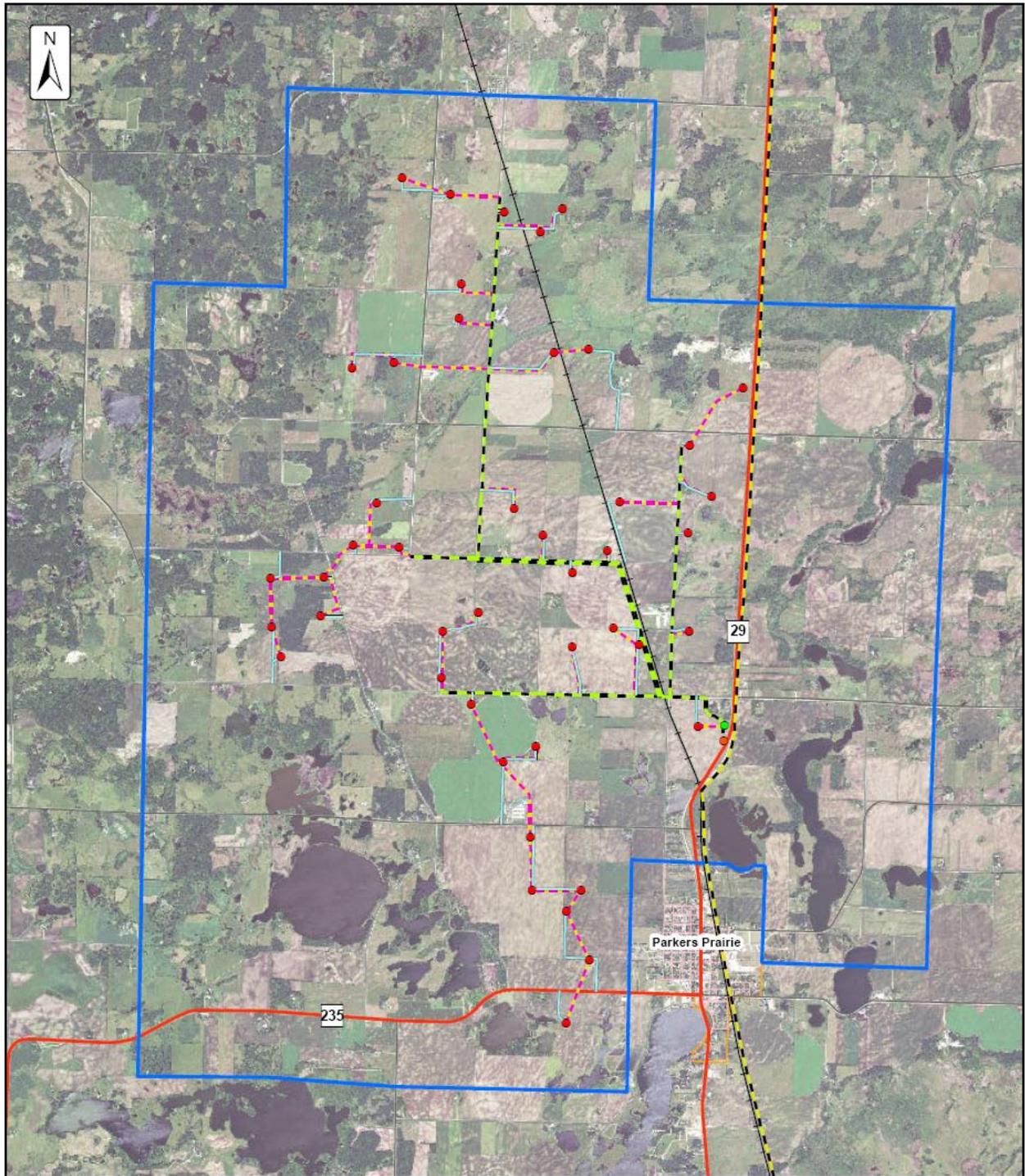
Signed this 19<sup>th</sup> day of May 2011

STATE OF MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE



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William Grant, Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Energy Resources



- Wind Turbines
- Future Office - Laydown Yard
- Future Substation - TAP
- Overhead Power 115 kV
- Overhead Power 34.5 kV
- Underground Transmission
- Access Roads
- MNDOT Interstate
- MNDOT\_US\_hwys
- MNDOT\_State\_hwys
- MNDOT Railroad
- Urban Areas
- Project Area

**Prairie Wind Energy  
 Project Area and Facilities**

0 0.5 1 Miles

HoustonEngineering Inc