

1 Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the proposed South Dakota PrairieWinds Project (Proposed Project), the South Dakota Wind Partners, LLC's (Wind Partners') proposed development, the purpose and need for Federal agency action, the projects' purposes and objectives, and summarizes the scoping process. This final environmental impact statement (FEIS) informs decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development. The FEIS was prepared under the direction of the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) Western Area Power Administration (Western) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS). Western and RUS are collectively termed the "Agencies." The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) is a Cooperating Agency for the EIS. The FEIS will be used by the responsible Federal officials to make an informed decision on the proposed Federal actions.

PrairieWinds SD1, Incorporated (PrairieWinds), a subsidiary of Basin Electric Power Cooperative (Basin Electric), has proposed to develop a wind-powered generating facility in south-central South Dakota, either near the Town of Wessington Springs or near the City of Winner. Basin Electric has requested to interconnect the Proposed Project with the transmission system owned and operated by Western. Basin Electric has also requested financing for the Proposed Project from RUS. PrairieWinds and Basin Electric are collectively termed the "Applicants."

In January 2010, Wind Partners, a South Dakota Limited Liability Company, and Basin Electric began discussions about including seven additional turbines within the alternative site near Wessington Springs. In response, Basin Electric submitted a request to Western to interconnect these additional wind turbines with the transmission system owned and operated by Western. Wind Partners would finance and own these turbines. Through an agreement between Basin Electric and Wind Partners, Basin Electric would construct, operate, and maintain the Wind Partners' proposed development. For only the alternative site near Wessington Springs, the term "Applicants" includes Wind Partners.

Basin Electric's generator interconnection requests and financing request trigger a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process of the Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development by Western and RUS, respectively. The Agencies have determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required and are serving as joint lead Federal Agencies for preparation of the document. RUS is the lead Federal agency for consultation with the USFWS under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA). The Agencies must consider impacts to cultural resources under NEPA. Western is the lead Federal agency for Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) and its implementing regulations (36 CFR 800), which include the identification, management and treatment of cultural resources, as well as the Government-to-Government consultation process.

Native American tribes and agencies with jurisdiction or special expertise were invited to be cooperating agencies. The USFWS has accepted to participate as a Cooperating Agency for preparation of the EIS.

Western and RUS prepared this FEIS in compliance with NEPA. The EIS analyzes the impacts of the proposed Federal actions, Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development in accordance with NEPA, as amended, DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures (Title 10 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 1021), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA (Title 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508) and RUS Environmental Policies and Procedures (Title 7 CFR Part 1794).

1.1 PROJECT OVERVIEW AND DESCRIPTION

Figure 1.1 depicts the wind resource potential in South Dakota (NREL 2009). **Figure 1.2** depicts the Proposed Project alternatives. Two alternative sites, Crow Lake and Winner, are under consideration for the wind-powered generation facility. The Crow Lake Alternative would be located on approximately 36,000 acres and is approximately 15 miles north of White Lake, and 17 miles southwest of Wessington Springs, South Dakota, within Brule, Aurora and Jerauld counties. The Winner Alternative would be located on approximately 83,000 acres entirely within Tripp County, and is approximately 8 miles south of Winner, South Dakota. Individual maps of each of the site alternatives are included as Crow Lake Alternative in **Figure 1.3** and Winner Alternative in **Figure 1.4**.

The Proposed Project would involve the installation and operation of a 151.5 megawatt (MW) nameplate capacity wind energy facility that would feature 101 wind turbine generators. Ten additional turbine locations were identified for each site alternative (within the site boundaries) and analyzed in the DEIS. These turbines were initially analyzed as contingent turbine locations for the Proposed Project in case specific turbine locations are eliminated as a result of additional resource surveys and engineering siting; or they may be installed within the selected site at a later date, pending future load, transmission availability and renewable production standard requirements. At this time, for only the Crow Lake Alternative, seven of these contingent turbines would be those proposed by the Wind Partners (depicted on **Figure 1.3**). The Wind Partners' proposed development, which would be sited within areas previously analyzed in the DEIS, would have a total nameplate capacity of 10.5 MW. For only the Crow Lake Alternative, the term "Applicants" includes Wind Partners.

Each turbine would have a hub height of 262 feet and a rotor diameter of 252 feet. The total height of each wind turbine would be 389 feet with a blade in the vertical position. The towers would be constructed of tubular steel, approximately 15 feet in diameter at the base, with internal joint flanges. The color of the towers and rotors would be standard white or off-white. During construction, a work/staging area at each turbine would include the crane pad and rotor assembly area, temporarily disturbing an area of approximately 500 feet by 500 feet; and permanently disturbing a 25-foot radius around each turbine.

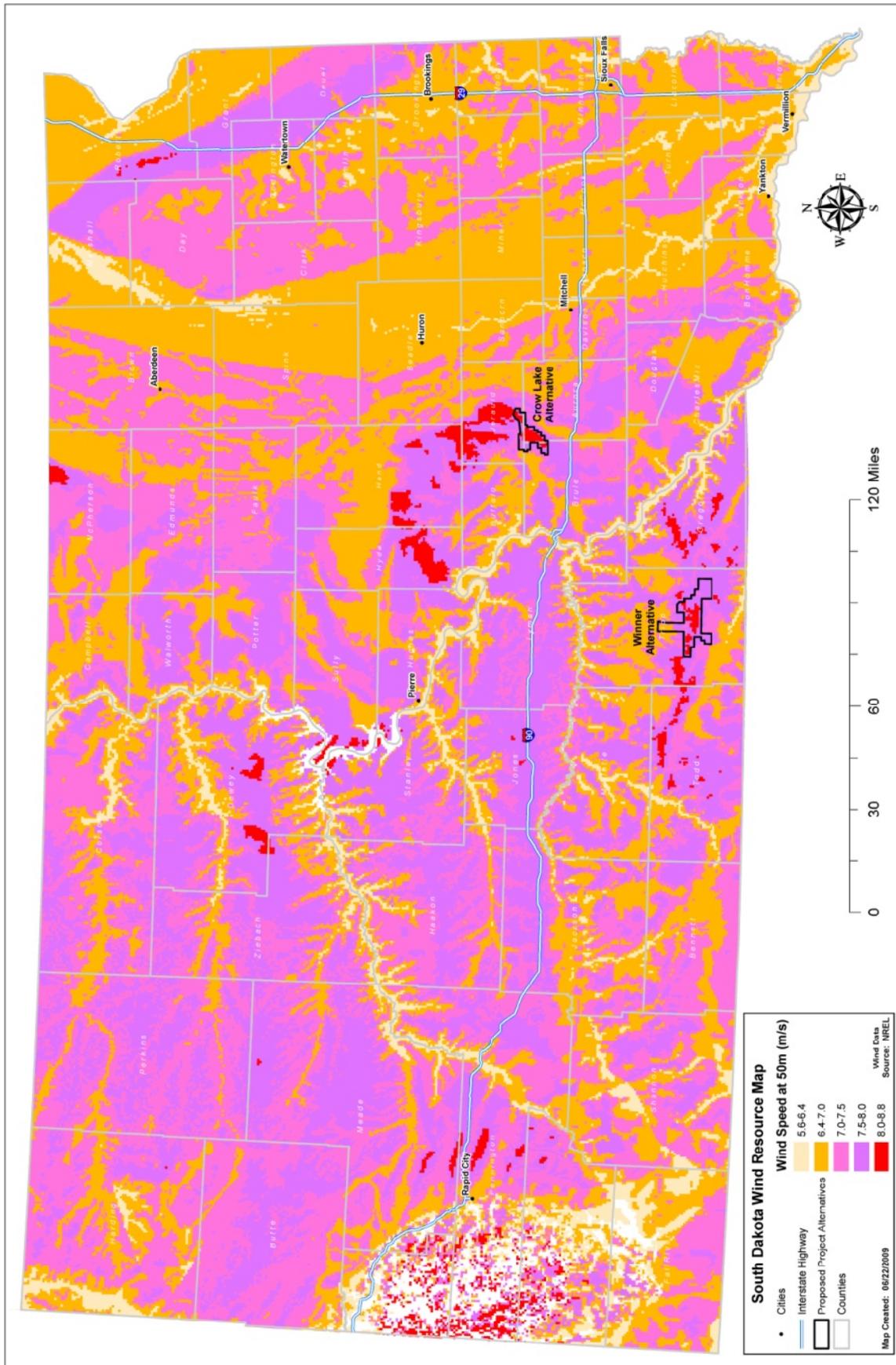


Figure 1.1 South Dakota Wind Resource Map

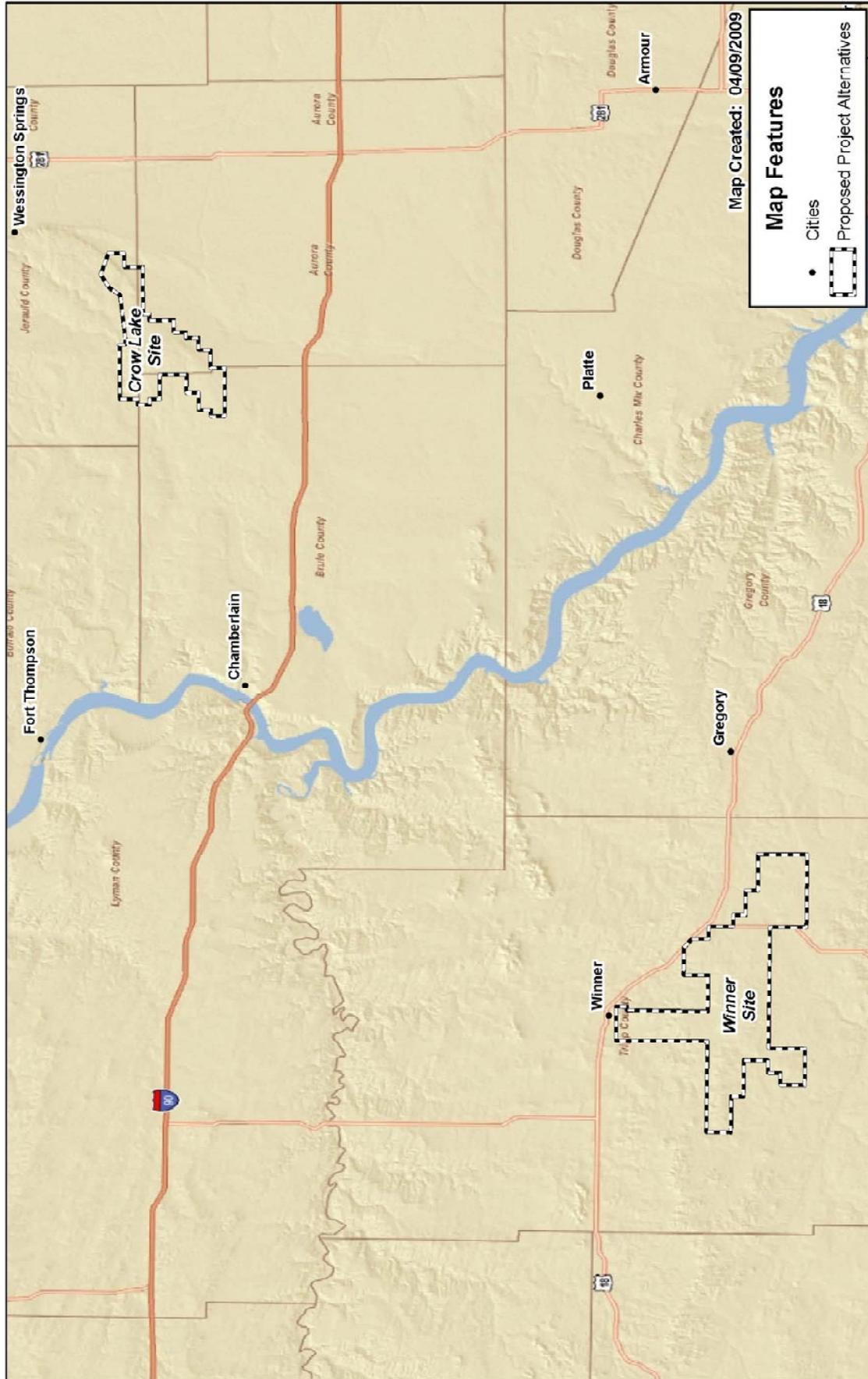
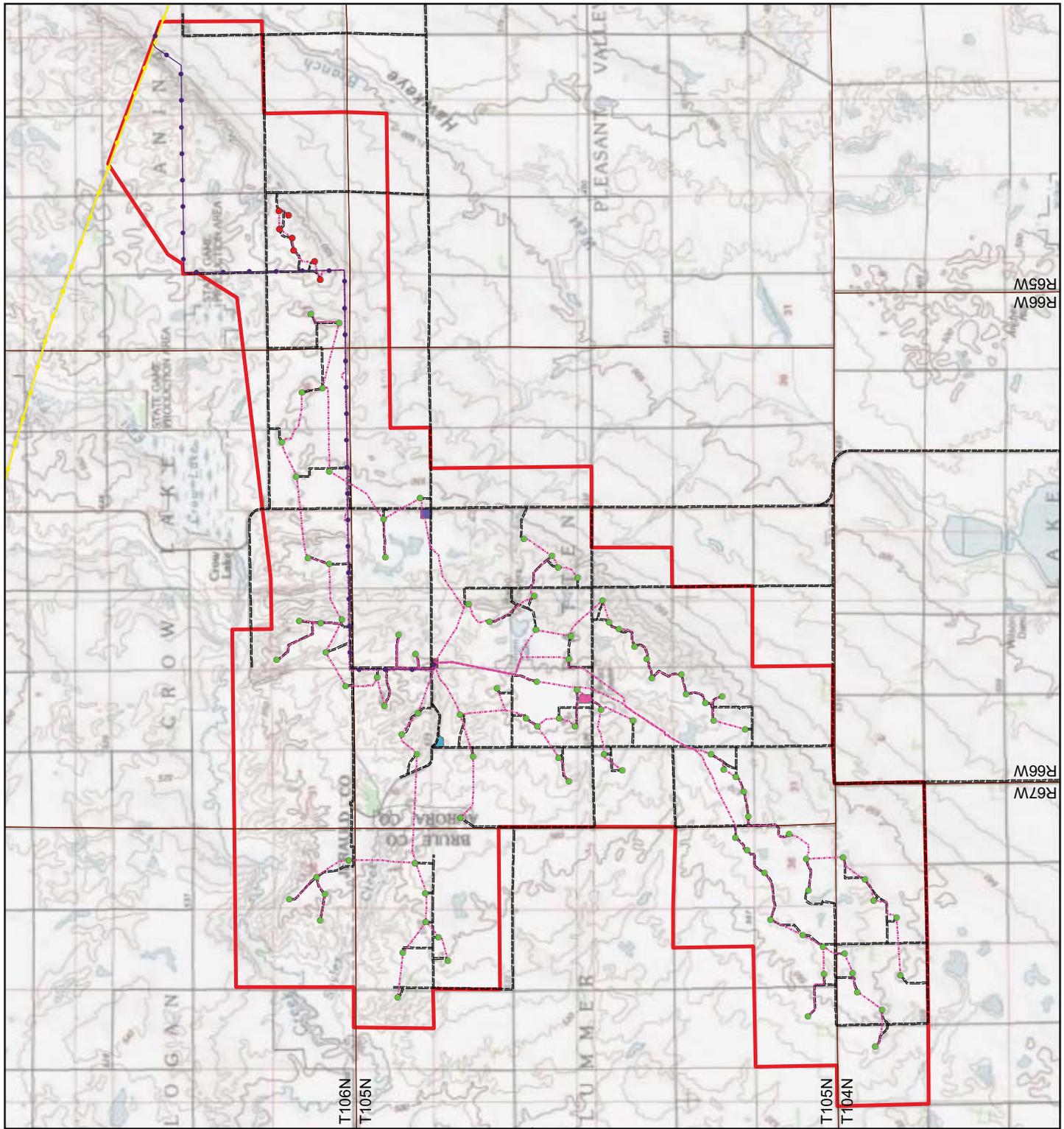
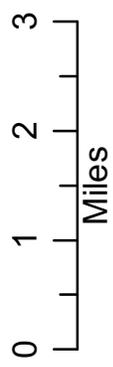
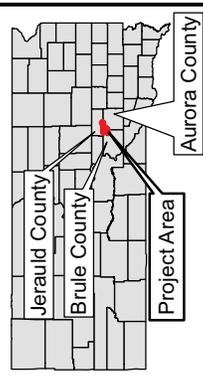


Figure 1.2 Proposed Project Alternatives

Crow Lake

-  Project Boundary
-  Township and Range
-  Western Utility Line
-  Batch Plant
-  Collector Substation
-  Laydown Yard
-  O&M Building
-  Internal Road
-  Collector System
-  Turbine
-  Wind Partners' Proposed Turbines
-  Overhead Transmission Line

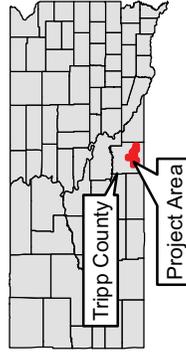


Winner

-  Project Boundary
-  Township and Range
-  Western Utility Line
-  State/US Highway
-  Substation and O&M Building
-  Turbine
-  Internal Road
-  Collector System

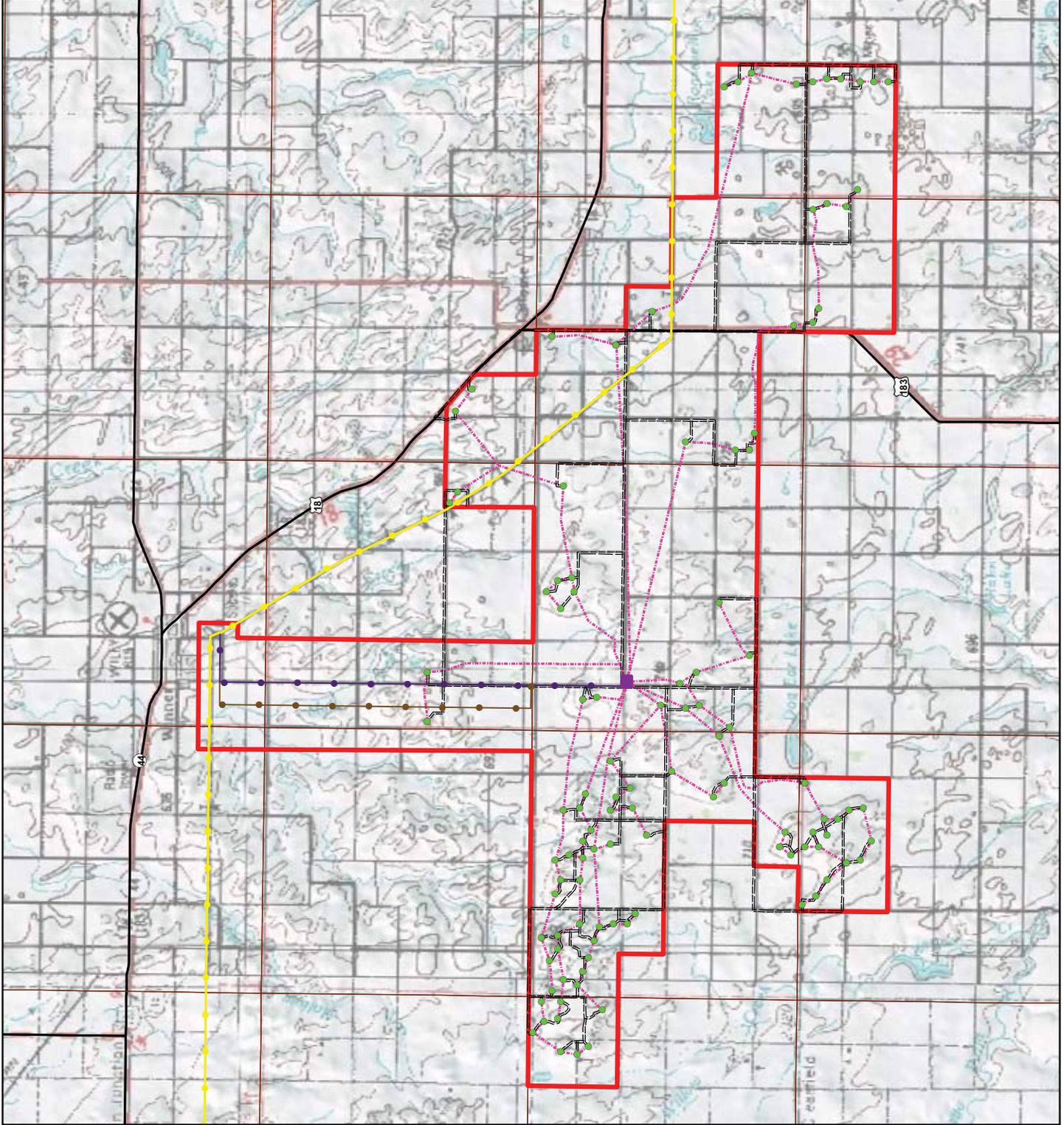
Overhead Transmission Line

-  Alternative 1
-  Alternative 2



PrairieWinds SD-1 Project

Figure 1-4



Each wind turbine would be connected by a service road for access and a 34.5-kilovolt (kV) underground electrical collection system that would ultimately route the power from each turbine to one central collector substation, where voltage would be increased for interconnection to Western's transmission system. The communication system would be located within the same trenches as the underground collector system.

The Crow Lake Alternative would require a new 34.5-kV to 230-kV collector substation as well as a 230-kV transmission line to interconnect to a new 230-kV interconnection point at Western's existing Wessington Springs Substation, in Jerauld County. The Wessington Springs Substation is a straight-line distance of approximately nine miles from the proposed collector substation; the transmission line length would be approximately 11 miles. The proposed transmission line would be built using steel single-pole structures. The structures would be between 85 and 95 feet high with a span of about 800 feet.

For the Crow Lake Alternative, approximately 44 miles of new access roads (four miles of which would be used for the Wind Partners' proposed development) would be built to facilitate construction and maintenance of the turbines and approximately 37 miles of existing roads would be used and, where appropriate, improved. For the Crow Lake Alternative, the underground collector system trench would be approximately 64 miles long (of which, eight miles would be used to interconnect the Wind Partners' proposed development with the Proposed Project collector substation).

The Winner Alternative would require one new 34.5-kV to 115-kV collector substation as well as a 115-kV transmission line to interconnect to Western's existing 115-kV Winner Substation, in Tripp County. The Winner Substation is a straight-line distance of approximately nine miles from the proposed collector substation. Depending on route, the proposed transmission line would be approximately 10 to 11 miles long. The proposed transmission line structures necessary for this site would be similar to those described for the Crow Lake Alternative.

For the Winner Alternative, approximately 46 miles of new access roads would be built to facilitate construction and maintenance of the turbines and approximately 71 miles of existing roads would be used and, where appropriate, improved. For the Winner Alternative, the underground collector system trench would be approximately 108 miles long.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

This section describes the Federal agency actions as well as the purpose and need for the Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development. The Proposed Project is subject to the jurisdiction of the South Dakota Public Utilities Commission (SDPUC), which has regulatory authority for siting wind generation facilities and transmission lines within the State. The SDPUC approved a Wind Energy Facility Permit for the Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development on June 15, 2010.

1.2.1 WESTERN INTERCONNECTION

Western has received two interconnection requests from Basin Electric. As addressed in the DEIS, the first request was to interconnect the Proposed Project with either Western's Winner or

Wessington Springs Substation. The first interconnection request was for 150 MW. Data from the same model of turbine in operation at other locations indicates that, under ideal conditions, these turbines are occasionally capable of generating slightly more than the nameplate rating of 1.5 MW each. Following issuance of the DEIS, to account for the Wind Partners' proposed development and the potential increase in turbine performance from the Proposed Project and Wind Partners' proposed development, Basin Electric submitted a second request to interconnect an additional 34 MW at the existing Wessington Springs Substation.

Western's purpose and need is to respond to the interconnection requests in accordance with Section 211 of the Federal Power Act and Western's Open Access Transmission Service Tariff (Tariff). Section 211 of the Federal Power Act requires that transmission service be provided upon request, if transmission capacity is available. The Wind Partners' proposed development is dependent upon the Proposed Project; therefore, Western is performing studies combining the interconnection requests. Thus, Western is examining the potential impacts of an 184-MW interconnection request at Wessington Springs. If Western either denies Basin Electric's request for an interconnection for Basin Electric's Proposed Project or approves the request for the interconnection at the Winner substation and not the Wessington Springs substation, the Wind Partners' proposed development could not proceed. Western could grant an interconnection for the original request which would allow the Proposed Project to be built, and deny the second interconnection request in which case, the Wind Partners' proposed development would not be constructed and the Proposed Project would be operated at its nameplate capacity of 151.5 MW.

Western's Tariff provides open access to its transmission system. If there is available capacity on the transmission system, Western provides transmission services through an interconnection. This interconnection request requires Federal action which triggers NEPA review. When responding to the need for agency action, and subject to its NEPA review, Western is bound by the following:

- Providing Transmission Service – under Western's Tariff, Western offers capacity on its transmission system to deliver electricity when capacity is available. The Tariff complies with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Final Orders which are intended to ensure non-discriminatory transmission system access. Western submitted revisions to its non-jurisdictional Tariff in January 2005 as to certain terms and for inclusion of the Large Generator Interconnection Procedures (LGIP) and a Large Generator Interconnection Agreement (LGIA). Both interconnection requests would be addressed under Western's LGIP. In March 2007, Western submitted another revision for certain terms and to incorporate the Small Generator Interconnection Procedures (SGIP) and a Small Generator Interconnection Agreement (SGIA). Final approval for these filings was received from FERC in September 2007. In September 2009 Western submitted yet another set of revisions to address FERC Order 890 requirements along with revisions to existing terms.
- Protecting Transmission System Reliability and Service to Existing Customers – Western must ensure that existing reliability and service is not degraded. Western's LGIP and SGIP provide for transmission and system studies to ensure that system reliability and service to existing customers are not adversely affected by new interconnections. These studies also identify system upgrades or additions necessary to accommodate the Proposed Project and ensure that they are in the project scope.

1.2.2 RUS FINANCING

RUS is authorized to make loans and loan guarantees that finance the construction of electric distribution, transmission and generation facilities, including system improvements and replacements required to furnish and improve electric service in rural areas, as well as demand side management, energy conservation programs, and on-grid and off-grid renewable energy systems.

Basin Electric has requested financial assistance for the Proposed Project from RUS. RUS's proposed Federal action is to decide whether to provide financial assistance; accordingly, completing the NEPA review process is one requirement, along with other technical and financial considerations in processing Basin Electric's application. No financial assistance has been requested from RUS for the Wind Partners' proposed development.

The Rural Electrification Act of 1936, as amended, (7 U.S. Code [U.S.C.] 901 *et seq.*) (RE Act) generally authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to make rural electrification and telephone loans, including specifying eligible borrowers, preferences, purposes, terms and conditions, security and self-liquidation requirements. The RE Act also authorizes the Secretary of Agriculture to assist borrowers that implement conservation and renewable energy programs.

RUS's agency action involves:

- Provide engineering reviews of the purpose and need, engineering feasibility and cost of the Proposed Project
- Ensure that the Proposed Project meets the borrower's requirements and prudent utility practices
- Evaluate the financial ability of the borrower to repay its potential financial obligation to RUS
- Review and study the alternatives to mitigate and improve transmission reliability issues
- Ensure that adequate transmission service and capacity are available to meet the Proposed Project needs
- Ensure that NEPA and other requirements and RUS Environmental Policies and Procedures are satisfied prior to taking a Federal action

1.2.3 COOPERATING AGENCIES

Two agencies, Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation and USFWS, expressed interest in participating as cooperating agencies. Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation is a non-profit non-governmental organization and will participate as an interested party, as prescribed in the CEQ Memorandum for the Heads of Federal Agencies (CEQ 2002), and will be engaged in the NEPA process and on distribution lists for review and comment on the NEPA documents. As of May 13, 2009, the USFWS formally accepted to participate as a Cooperating Agency. All agencies, regardless of cooperating agency status, were kept informed of the Proposed Project and received updates as they became available.

The USFWS is a Federal agency whose primary responsibility is working with others to conserve, protect and enhance fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the continuing

benefit of the American people. The proposed development sites are located within two USFWS Wetland Management District (WMD) administrative boundaries. The Huron and Lake Andes WMDs are responsible for addressing the potential impacts to USFWS lands within the Proposed Project area.

Additionally, the USFWS works with agencies and other partners to conserve wetlands, migratory birds and Federally-listed threatened/endangered wildlife by administering the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) (16 U.S.C. 703-712), Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act of 1940 (BGEPA) (16 U.S.C. 668-668d, 54 Stat. 250), and the ESA (7 U.S.C. 136; 16 U.S.C. 460 *et seq.*).

The leased private land within the proposed wind farm sites could include lands encumbered by perpetual easements administered by the USFWS. These conservation easements are minimally restrictive instruments that grant the USFWS the ability to protect the grassland and wetland habitat on these properties. Easements are acquired as an alternative to fee-title acquisition and are administered as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System to perpetually protect grasslands and wetlands to benefit migratory birds and other wildlife. While easements are particular areas of concern, potential long-term impacts to wildlife and habitat resources can occur on any lands. Thus, the USFWS will be actively involved in the review of the proposed wind turbine sites to identify and offset impacts to USFWS interests and trust resources throughout the project area. When the final location is chosen, and micro-siting of facilities begins, additional coordination will be pursued with the USFWS.

1.2.4 BASIN ELECTRIC'S PURPOSE AND NEED

PrairieWinds is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Basin Electric. PrairieWinds proposes to construct, own, operate and maintain the Proposed Project.

Project Purpose

Basin Electric is a consumer-owned, regional cooperative headquartered in Bismarck, North Dakota, which services more than 120 member rural electric systems in nine States: Colorado, Iowa, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. These member systems, in turn, distribute electricity to more than 2.8 million customers.

Public policy regarding the electric industry has increasingly focused on the carbon intensity of the resources commonly used to generate electricity. As a result, incentives and regulations to encourage or require the generation of power from renewable resources are being actively considered and/or implemented within the Basin Electric member service areas. At the same time, a number of proposals for national Renewable Portfolio Standards (RPS) are pending in Congress. With members in nine States, Basin Electric recognizes the need for additional renewable energy capacity to service forecasted member load growth demands and to meet State-mandated RPS.

Basin Electric membership passed a resolution at their 2005 annual meeting that established a goal to “obtain renewable or environmentally benign resources equal to 10 percent of the MW capacity needed to meet its member demand by 2010.” This project would provide an opportunity for them to meet that goal.

State Renewable Energy Objectives

Several States within Basin Electric’s service territory, including Colorado, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, have adopted Renewable Energy Objectives (REOs) that require renewable generation to meet a certain percentage of retail sales. The REOs adopted in the various States include both mandatory and voluntary goals that range from 10 to 25 percent of energy production to be generated or procured from an eligible energy technology by a specified deadline. Deadlines for compliance range from 2015 to 2025.

The State of South Dakota has a voluntary 10 percent by 2015 REO. An assumption of 1.25 percent by 2008, 2.5 percent by 2009, 3.75 percent by 2010, 5 percent by 2011, 6.25 percent by 2012, 7.5 percent by 2013, 8.75 percent by 2014 and 10 percent by 2015 was used to meet the REO. Basin Electric serves member cooperatives including East River, Grand, Rosebud and Rushmore.

Basin Electric’s Renewable Energy Sources

Basin Electric captures approximately 22 MW of recovered energy generation (heat recovery from pipeline compressors) from four sites. Four additional sites, another 22 MW of electricity, are expected to be available by late 2009. The total wind generation owned by Basin Electric is projected to be 125.2 MW by late 2009; and the wind energy purchased is 131 MW, making the total wind generation (owned and purchased) available to Basin Electric’s members 256.2 MW by late 2009.

Basin Electric would need a total of 272 MW of renewable capacity, which is 10 percent of the 2,721 MW of forecasted member load for the year 2010, to meet its goal. With the addition of 151.5 MW for the Proposed Project, they will be able to meet the REO requirements for those States that currently have such requirements through the year 2016. **Figure 1.5** compares the needed renewable generation to the existing and proposed renewable generation.

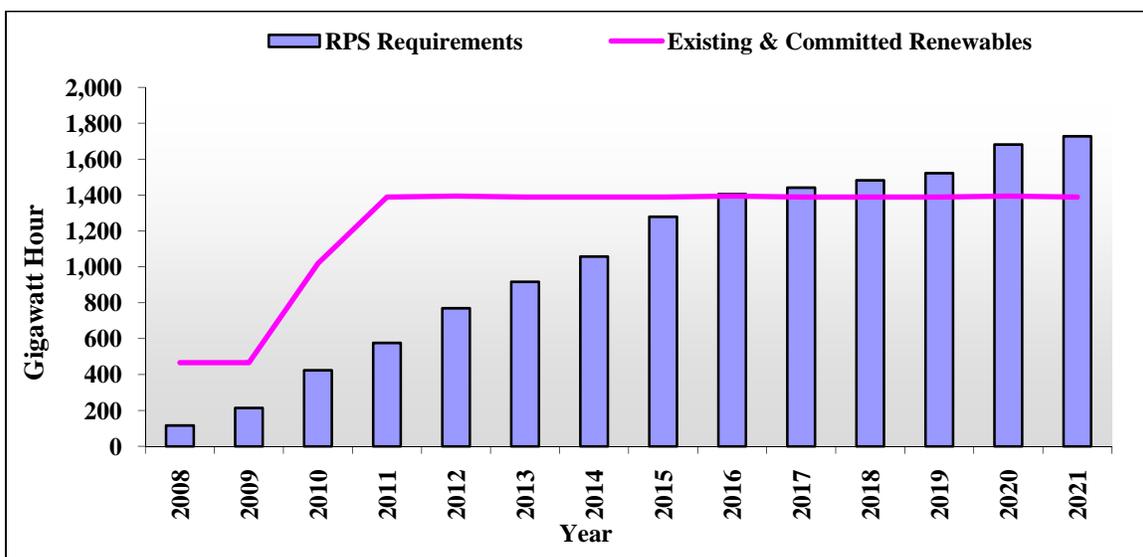


Figure 1.5 RPS Requirements and Existing/Proposed Renewable Energy Sources

Existing Resources

According to its 2007 Power Supply Analysis (PSA), Basin Electric operates a total of 3,518 MW of electric generating capacity and has a total of 136 MW of wind energy resources in the form of owned projects and power purchase agreements; additionally, Basin Electric has 22 MW of recovered energy generation through power purchase agreements. Basin Electric also manages and maintains 2,424 miles of high-voltage transmission lines, 40 switchyards and substations, and 58 microwave installations used for communications and system protection.

Projected Energy Requirements

Between 1999 and 2006, Basin Electric's system peak demand increased 752 MW, from 1,195 MW to 1,947 MW, which is approximately 107 MW per year. Their system energy sales increased 5.3 million megawatt-hours (MWh), from 6.5 million MWh to 11.8 million MWh, or approximately 760,000 MWh per year. Basin Electric forecasts peak demand on its system to grow by 1,834 MW from 2006 through 2021. This will be a growth of approximately 122 MW per year. The load growth is driven mainly by commercial sector growth, which includes energy related development in the form of coal, oil and gas development. There are also increased loads in the residential sector mainly located on the outskirts of larger cities within the service territory. This is depicted in **Figure 1.6**.

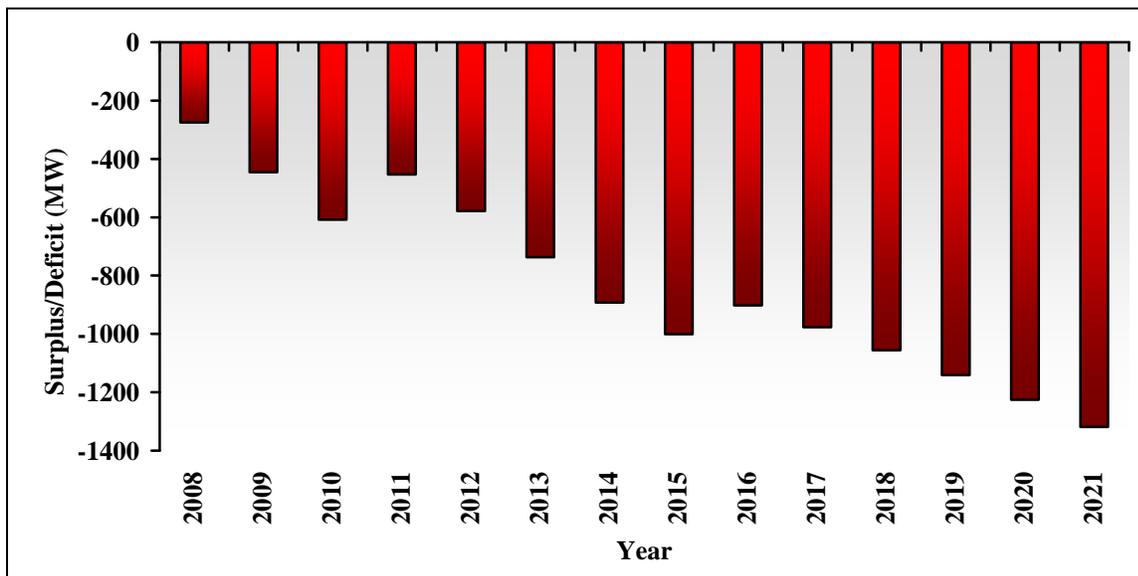


Figure 1.6 Total System Load and Capability

Basin Electric's total system deficit was anticipated to be 275 MW in 2008 and is forecasted to increase steadily over time. As **Figure 1.6** depicts, the deficit is anticipated to decrease in 2011 from 2010 levels when the new Dry Fork Station in Wyoming is expected to go commercial; the deficit is also anticipated to decline slightly in 2016 when Basin Electric's long-term power supply obligation ends.

Project Need

The need has been established for additional renewable energy capacity in the PSA to serve forecasted member load growth demands, to meet Basin Electric's renewable energy goal set forth in 2005, and to meet State mandated RPS. Solar resources in the region are limited. While solar economics are improving, costs are still not competitive with wind. Geothermal and bio-based resources are, in some cases, cost effective but are restricted to limited or distant locations, available only in small quantities, or present other environmental concerns. In contrast, potential wind resources in the Basin Electric member service territory are generally recognized as excellent, and limited mainly by land use and transmission. The proposed wind project was determined to be the best available, least-cost renewable resource option to satisfy future load and RPS requirements.

1.2.5 WIND PARTNERS' PURPOSE AND NEED

The concept underlying the Wind Partners' proposed wind development is to enable local community involvement and investment in wind projects. The proposed development would also help meet the State of South Dakota's voluntary REO of 10 percent by 2015.

1.3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK AND LAND STATUS

The Proposed Project must comply with Federal, State and local laws requiring permits or approvals. **Table 1.1** lists agencies and their respective permit/authorizing responsibilities with respect to the Proposed Project.

In addition to complying with Federal, State and local laws requiring permits or approvals, the Applicants also coordinated with private land owners for lease agreements. All lands considered for the Proposed Projects are privately owned parcels. This could include lands encumbered by perpetual easements administered by the USFWS, which are acquired as an alternative to fee-title acquisition and are administered as part of the National Wildlife Refuge System. The Applicants have entered into up-to 50-year lease agreements for placement of the wind turbine generators and associated infrastructure with private landowners within the Proposed Project areas. The Applicants would negotiate in good faith to enter into a new lease agreement upon commercially reasonable terms and conditions to replace the lease agreement at the end of the 50-year agreement. The decision to renew the leases versus decommissioning the facility would be made at that time based on market conditions. Depending on current wind turbine technology, at the end of the lease period, the wind turbine generators may be updated with more efficient components, thereby, extending the wind turbine generator service life.

1.4 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT / SCOPING

As part of the NEPA process, public participation is a way to inform the public about activities that involve a Federal action and solicit input regarding the proposed project. Western and RUS utilized input identified through public participation to assist with the development of the scope, content and alternatives analysis for the EIS. By incorporating public participation into the development of the EIS, Western, RUS and USFWS will be able to make a more informed decision on their respective proposed actions.

Table 1.1 Regulatory Compliance, Potential Permits and Approvals for the Construction and Operation of the Proposed Project

Agency	Regulatory Compliance/ Type of Approval	Description
Federal Approvals		
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)	Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures (SPCC) Plan	SPCC Plans are required for non-transportation facilities that have a total above-ground oil storage capacity of 1,320-gallons.
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Form 7460-1. Notice of Proposed Construction	Notice and approval are required for structures over 200 feet in height. FAA approval of lighting and marking of turbines is required.
U.S. Army Corp of Engineers (USACE)	Section 404 Clean Water Act (CWA) Permit	If wetlands would be impacted, a permit for placement of fill would be required.
USFWS	MBTA, Section 7 of ESA, BGEPA	Special status species protection.
USFWS	Special Use Permit (SUP), Right-of-Way Permit, Compatibility Analysis of Disturbed Easements	If constructing in wetland or grassland easements, then a permit or analysis is required for temporary disturbance.
Western, RUS, State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), and Tribal Nations	Section 106 of NHPA	Cultural resources protection.
Western, RUS	Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA)	Cultural resources protection.
State of South Dakota		
Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR)	Section 401, CWA	State requirement for Water Quality Certification.
DENR	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), General Construction Storm Water Water Rights Permit	Required for disturbance of over 1 acre of land. Must prepare a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).
South Dakota Game, Fish and Parks (SDGFP)	State Threatened and Endangered Species List	Special status species protection.
SDPUC	Energy Facility Site Permit	Required for construction of generation facility.
South Dakota Department of Transportation (SDDOT)	Oversize/Overweight Permit	Permit required for hauling construction equipment and materials on State highways.
SDDOT	Road Approach/Access Permit	Permits required for construction to of access roads to connect to a State highways.
SDDOT	Utility Crossing Permit	Permit required for utility crossings on State highway right-of-way.
SDDOT	Aeronautical Hazard Permit	Permit lighting plan determined with FAA coordination.
Local Permits		
Brule, Aurora, Jerauld and Tripp Counties	Zoning, conditional use authorization and related building permits	Permits required for project construction.
Brule, Aurora, Jerauld and Tripp Counties	Road Approach/Access permits	Permits required for project construction.
Brule, Aurora, Jerauld and Tripp Counties	Soil Erosion and Sediment Control Plan	Permits required for project construction.

The CEQ, DOE and RUS NEPA regulations define scoping as an early and open process for determining the scope of issues to be addressed in an EIS and for identifying input related to the proposed project. Western and RUS invited Federal, State, local and tribal governments, the Applicants, and other interested persons and groups to participate in defining the scope of the EIS. The public participation process also satisfies the requirements under Section 106 for government-to-government consultation. Western and RUS invited the tribes to participate in reviews conducted under NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

Western and RUS employed various methods to provide information to the public and solicit input regarding the Proposed Project. Information was included in direct mailings that were sent to over 4,000 potentially interested persons in and near the project area, including addresses within seven miles of each of the alternative sites. Venues for participation included two scoping meetings and one interagency meeting. In addition to receiving comments at meetings, the Agencies invited interested individuals to submit written comments via mail, fax, e-mail and/or the project website. Information on additional public participation opportunities to review and comment on the DEIS is provided in **Section 1.5**. The information in the following sections summarizes the input that was received on the Proposed Project through the scoping process. Copies of the notices and meeting materials are included in **Appendix A** of this report.

Western received the interconnection request for the Wind Partners' proposed development following issuance of the DEIS. Since the the Wind Partners' proposed development would be located within an area analyzed under the DEIS, Western and RUS determined that a separate scoping effort was not needed for the Wind Partners' proposed development. The turbines that would be installed for the Wind Partners' proposed development would not constitute a substantial change to the Proposed Project, or present significant new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns on the Proposed Project or its impacts, as discussed in 40 CFR 1502.9(c)(1). Therefore, Western and RUS determined that a Supplemental DEIS was not required for the Wind Partners' proposed development.

1.4.1 NOTICE OF INTENT

The "Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and to Conduct Scoping Meetings; Notice of Floodplains and Wetland Involvement" was published in the *Federal Register* (FR) (74 FR 15718) on April 7, 2009. The Notice of Intent (NOI) included information on the Proposed Project, agency actions, times and locations for the April 28 and April 29, 2009, scoping meetings and contact information for questions pertaining to the Proposed Project.

1.4.2 NEWSPAPER NOTICES

Notices announcing the public scoping meetings were published in *Indian Country Today*, *Mitchell Daily Republic*, *Plankinton South Dakota Mail* and the *Winner Advocate*. *Indian Country Today* is a national, Native American interest publication, while the others are local newspapers. Advertisement publications in each newspaper provided information on the proposed project, scoping meeting information and contact information for questions pertaining to the proposed project. The second notice publication in *Indian Country Today*, *Mitchell Daily Republic* and *Winner Advocate*, provided the same information as the initial announcements.

The scoping meeting notice was published as follows:

- *Indian Country Today* – April 8 and 22, 2009
- *Mitchell Daily Republic* – April 8 and 22, 2009
- Plankinton South Dakota Mail – April 23, 2009
- *Winner Advocate* – April 8 and 22, 2009

1.4.3 DIRECT MAILINGS

In addition to the NOI, Western and RUS mailed postcard scoping notices and letters, which included the scoping meeting information, to over 4,000 potentially interested persons. The mailing list included Federal, State and local agencies; elected officials; Native American tribes; members of the public; and addresses within seven miles of the Proposed Project alternatives.

The postcard scoping notice was mailed on April 6, 2009. This postcard mailing provided information on the Proposed Project; details for the April 28 and April 29, 2009 scoping meetings; and contact information for questions pertaining to the Proposed Project and/or the NEPA process.

In addition to the postcard scoping mailings, a letter was sent to more than 15 Native American tribes (tribes, communities and representative councils) on April 13, 2009, providing information on the Proposed Project, EIS scoping meeting details and contact information for questions pertaining to the Proposed Project. The letter also served to initiate government-to-government consultation and invited the tribes to participate in the reviews conducted under NEPA and Section 106 of the NHPA.

1.4.4 SCOPING MEETINGS

Two scoping meetings were hosted by Western and RUS during the public scoping process. The scoping meetings were held using an open-house format to allow for an informal one-on-one exchange of information. Scoping meeting handouts included a copy of the NOI, project fact sheet, scoping process information sheet, comment form and a DOE NEPA brochure. Large-scale aerial photographs illustrating the Proposed Project alternatives were available to help facilitate identification of issues and alternatives. Additional large-scale poster boards included: a South Dakota wind resource map, an EIS process and timeline graphic, the agencies' Federal Action boards, and turbine and transmission line siting parameters. A station was set up at the meetings with a looping PowerPoint presentation to provide an opportunity for individuals to sit and view Proposed Project information and follow along with a print out of the presentation slides. The same information was available at each meeting. Copies of the meeting materials are included in **Appendix A. Table 1.2** lists the scoping meeting locations, dates, times and attendance.

Table 1.2 Public Scoping Meetings

Location	Date	Time	Attendance
Winner, SD	April 28, 2009	4 - 7 p.m.	88
Plankinton, SD	April 29, 2009	4 - 7 p.m.	81
Total			169

1.4.5 INTERAGENCY MEETING

A letter was sent on April 9, 2009, to invite Federal, State and local agencies to participate in an interagency meeting for the EIS. In addition, agencies with jurisdiction or special expertise were requested to be a cooperating agency for the Proposed Project.

On April 28, 2009, Western and RUS hosted an interagency meeting at the Best Western Ramkota Hotel, in Pierre, South Dakota, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Proposed Project-specific information was presented at the meeting. The following list summarizes the agencies represented at the interagency meeting (in alphabetical order):

- Aurora County Weed Supervisor
- Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
- Intertribal Council on Utility Policy (Intertribal COUP)
- Mayor of Wessington Springs, South Dakota
- South Dakota Aeronautics Commission
- South Dakota DENR
- SDGFP
- South Dakota Governor's Office
- SDPUC
- SHPO
- South Dakota State Land Department
- USACE
- USFWS
- Wessington Springs Area Development Corporation

1.4.6 SCOPING COMMENT SUMMARY

Overall, 16 comment forms were received during the scoping and interagency meetings, 46 comment forms/letters were mailed in, 14 comments were e-mailed to the project e-mail address, and one faxed comment was received. A summary of the written comments received and issues identified through May 15, 2009, are included in **Appendix A**.

1.5 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT / DEIS

Subsequent to preparation of the DEIS, the Agencies requested comments on the project details, draft environmental findings and alternatives evaluated in the DEIS. Western and RUS employed various methods to provide information to the public and solicit input regarding the DEIS. Information was included in direct mailings that were sent to over 4,000 potentially interested persons in and near the project area, including Federal, State, local and tribal governments, the Applicants, other interested persons and groups, and addresses within seven miles of each of the alternative sites. Venues for participation included one open house meeting, one public hearing and one interagency meeting. In addition to receiving comments at meetings, the Agencies invited interested individuals to submit written comments via mail, fax, e-mail and/or the project website. The information in the following sections summarizes the process that was implemented to invite comments on the DEIS and the method for responding to comments. Copies of the

DEIS Executive Summary were available at the interagency meeting, open house, and public hearing. Copies of the notices and meeting materials (excluding Executive Summary) are included in **Appendix E** of this report.

1.5.1 NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

The “Environmental Impact Statements, Notice of Availability” was published in the *Federal Register* (75 FR 2540) on January 15, 2010. The Notice of Availability (NOA) provided information on the Proposed Project, locations, and point of contact for the Proposed Project.

Paid advertisements announcing information on the Proposed Project; agency actions; times and locations for the February 11, 2010, open house and public hearing; locations for public review of the DEIS; and contact information for questions pertaining to the Proposed Project were published in *Indian Country Today*, *Mitchell Daily Republic*, *Plankinton South Dakota Mail*, and the *Winner Advocate*.

In addition, Western and RUS mailed open house /public hearing notice post cards, DEIS request forms, and letters in January 2010 to over 7,000 potentially interested persons. The mailing list included Federal, State and local agencies; elected officials; Native American tribes; members of the public; and addresses within seven miles of the Proposed Project alternatives.

1.5.2 OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC HEARING

Western and RUS hosted an open house and public hearing on February 11, 2010, at Cozard Memorial Library, in Chamberlain, South Dakota. The open-house was held from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. and allowed for an informal one-on-one exchange of information. Open house handouts included a fact sheet for the Wind Partners’ proposed development and a comment form. Large-scale poster boards included: a map depicting the site alternatives, a South Dakota wind resource map; an EIS process and timeline graphic; the Agencies’ Federal Action boards; and turbine and transmission line siting parameters. Additionally, copies of the DEIS and the executive summary were available. The public hearing was held from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. During the public hearing, information on the Proposed Project, the Wind Partners’ proposed development and Agency actions was provided. In addition, a court reporter was available and members of the public were given an opportunity to provide feedback on the draft environmental findings and alternatives for inclusion in the EIS. Fifteen individuals attended the open house and public hearing; the court reporter transcribed comments from three individuals.

1.5.3 INTERAGENCY MEETING

On February 11, 2010, Western and RUS hosted an interagency meeting at the Rawlins Municipal Library, in Pierre, South Dakota from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. to encourage Federal, State and local agencies to discuss project components and provide feedback on the draft environmental findings and alternatives. Proposed Project-specific information was presented at the meeting followed by a group discussion. Thirteen representatives from seven different agencies attended the meeting.

1.5.4 DEIS COMMENTS

The public review period of the DEIS commenced on January 15, 2010, and closed on March 1, 2010. The Agencies received 33 comment letters (via public hearing, fax, mail and e-mail) on the DEIS. Substantive, factual, and editorial comments were incorporated and addressed in the FEIS; other comments not affecting the substance of the document have been noted. A guide for comment and response location, the comment and response tracking table, copies of written comments and hearing transcripts are included in **Appendix F**.

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