

1 Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the proposed South Dakota PrairieWinds Project (Proposed Project), the purpose and need for Federal agency action and the project's purpose and objectives, and summarizes the scoping process. This draft environmental impact statement (DEIS) informs decision-makers and the public of the potential environmental impacts that could result from the Proposed Project. The DEIS 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) was a cooperator for the DEIS. The DEIS 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. PrairieWinds has requested financing for the Proposed Project from RUS. PrairieWinds and Basin Electric are collectively termed the "Applicants."

Basin Electric's generator interconnection request and PrairieWinds' financing request trigger a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process of the Proposed Project by Western and RUS, respectively. The Agencies have determined that an environmental impact statement (EIS) is required and are serving as co-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 Proposed Project 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. The Section 106 and NEPA reviews are conducted with an integrated approach.

Native American tribes and agencies with jurisdiction or special expertise have been invited to be cooperating agencies. The USFWS has accepted to participate as a cooperating agency for the Proposed Project.

Western and RUS are preparing this EIS in compliance with NEPA. The EIS will analyze the impacts of their respective proposed Federal actions and the Proposed Project 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 37,000 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 Proposed Project 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 and analyzed in this DEIS. These turbines may be utilized as contingent turbine locations for the Proposed Project if 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. 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.

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. Approximately 30 to 40 miles of new access roads would be built to facilitate construction and maintenance of the turbines. Approximately 25 to 35 miles of existing roads would be used and, where appropriate, improved. The underground collector system trench would be approximately 60 miles long. The communication system would be located within the same trenches. The collector substation and transmission line are further described within each alternative discussion below.

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 approximately nine miles from the proposed collector substation. Regardless of route, the transmission line length would be approximately 11 miles. The proposed 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.

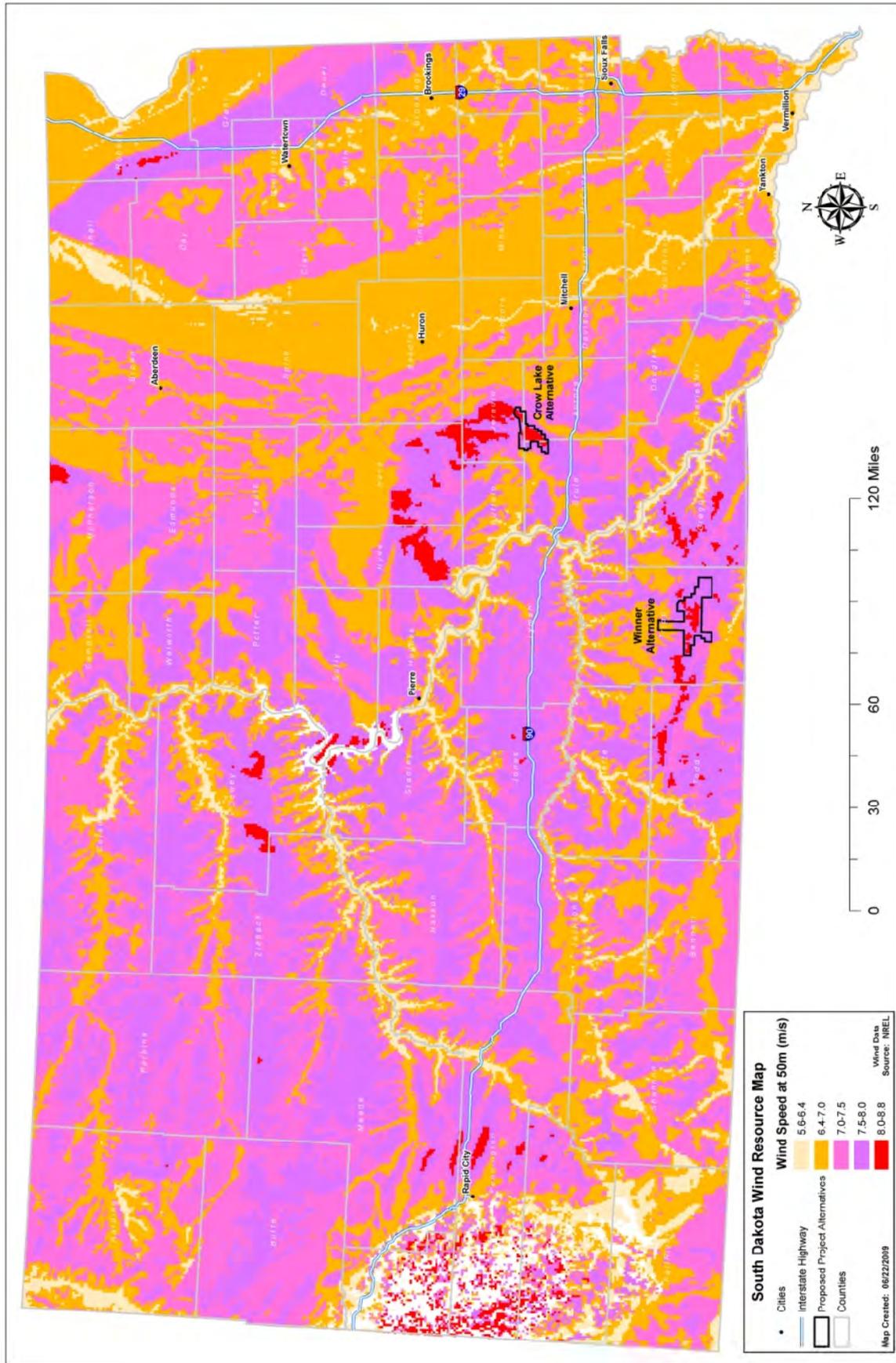


Figure 1.1 South Dakota Wind Resource Map

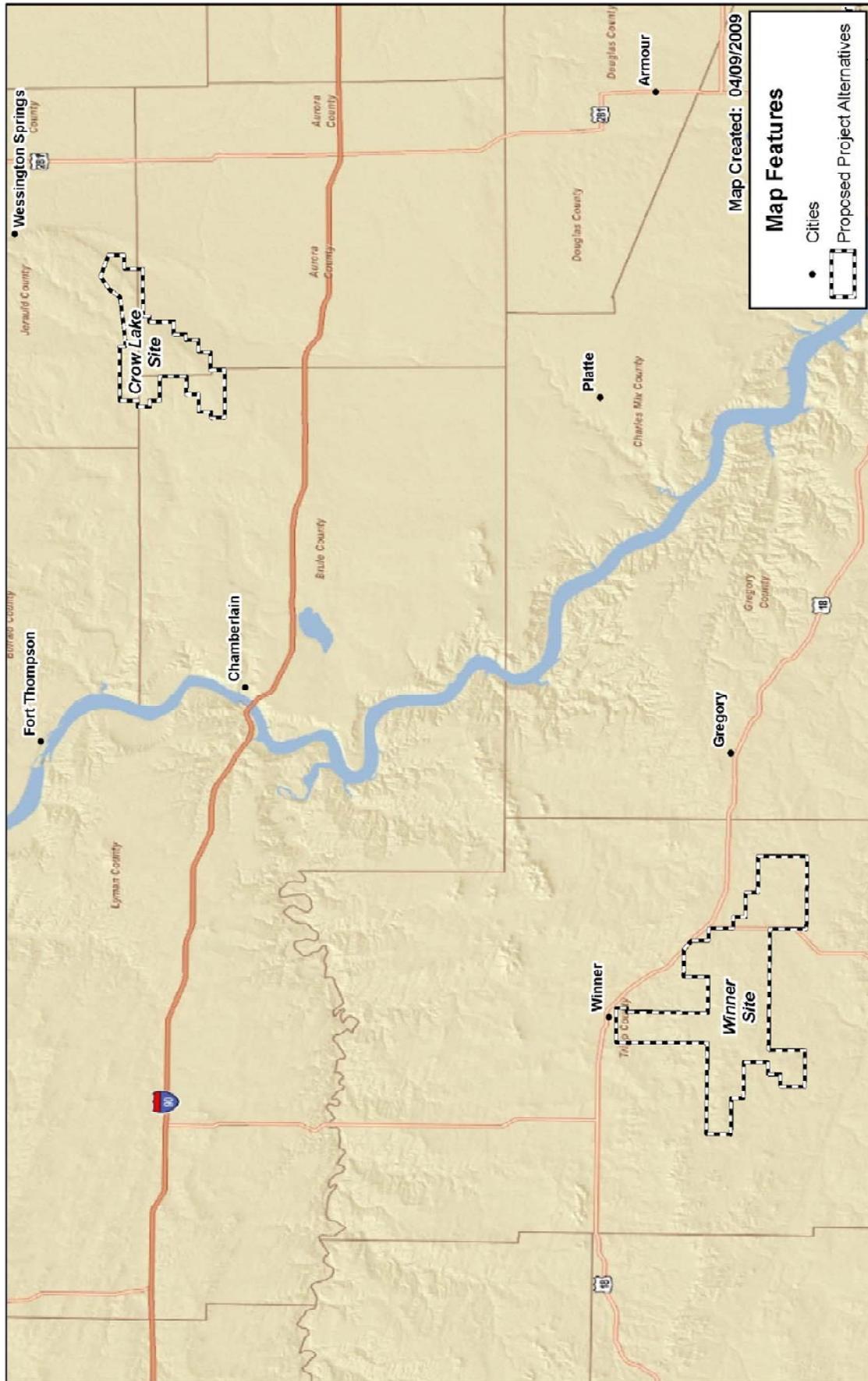


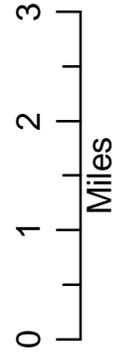
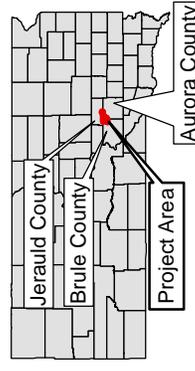
Figure 1.2 Proposed Project Alternatives

Crow Lake

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

Overhead Transmission Line

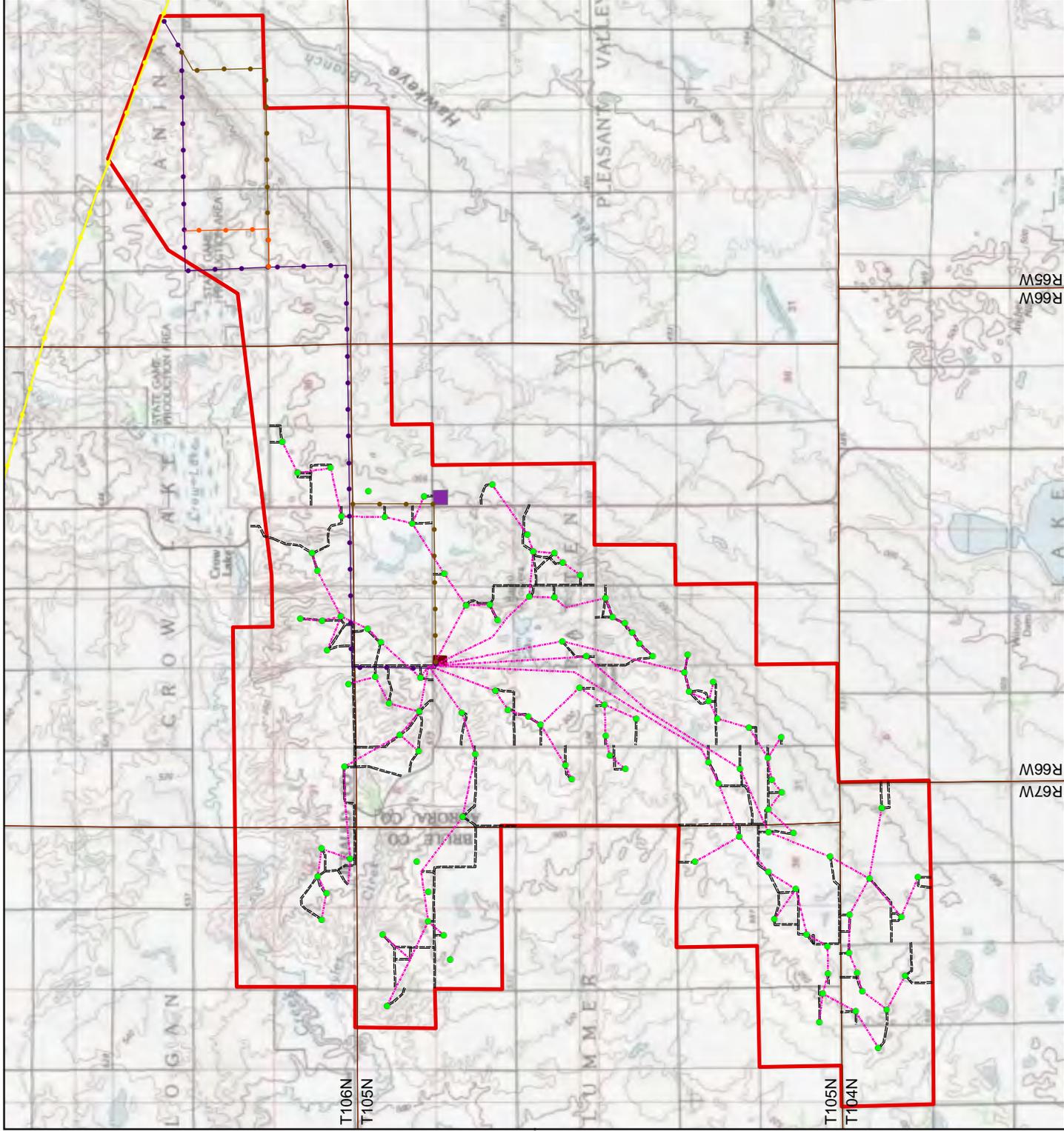
-  Alternative 1
-  Alternative 2
-  Alternative 3



SDPW Project

Figure 1.3

Date: 06.03.09	Infrastructure	Author: JAG
C:\Data\Basin\Maps\EIS\Winem\Crow_Lake_Infrastructure		



Due to engineering considerations, the transmission line Alternative 1 location includes area outside of the Crow Lake Alternative boundary; this boundary will be revised to include the transmission line route in the FEIS.

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 approximately nine miles from the proposed collector substation. Depending on route, the proposed transmission line would be approximately 10 to 11 miles long. Other facilities necessary for this site would be similar to those described for the Crow Lake Alternative.

1.2 PURPOSE AND NEED

This section describes the Federal agency actions as well as the purpose and need for the Proposed Project. 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 Applicants will submit an application for an Energy Conversion Facility Permit to the SDPUC. The SDPUC permit would be needed to authorize the Applicants to construct the Proposed Project under South Dakota rules and regulations.

1.2.1 WESTERN INTERCONNECTION

The Applicants propose to interconnect its Proposed Project with either Western's Winner or Wessington Springs Substation. Western's purpose and need is to respond to the interconnection request 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.

Western's Tariff provides open access to its transmission system. If there is available capacity in 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:

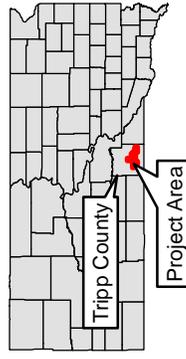
- Providing Transmission Service - under Western's Tariff, Western offers capacity on its transmission system to deliver electricity when capacity is available. The Tariff complies with the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission's (FERC) Final Orders which are intended to ensure non-discriminatory transmission 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). Final approval for that filing was received from FERC in September 2007. 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). In September 2009 Western submitted yet another set of revisions to address FERC Order 890 requirements along with revisions to existing terms.

Winner

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

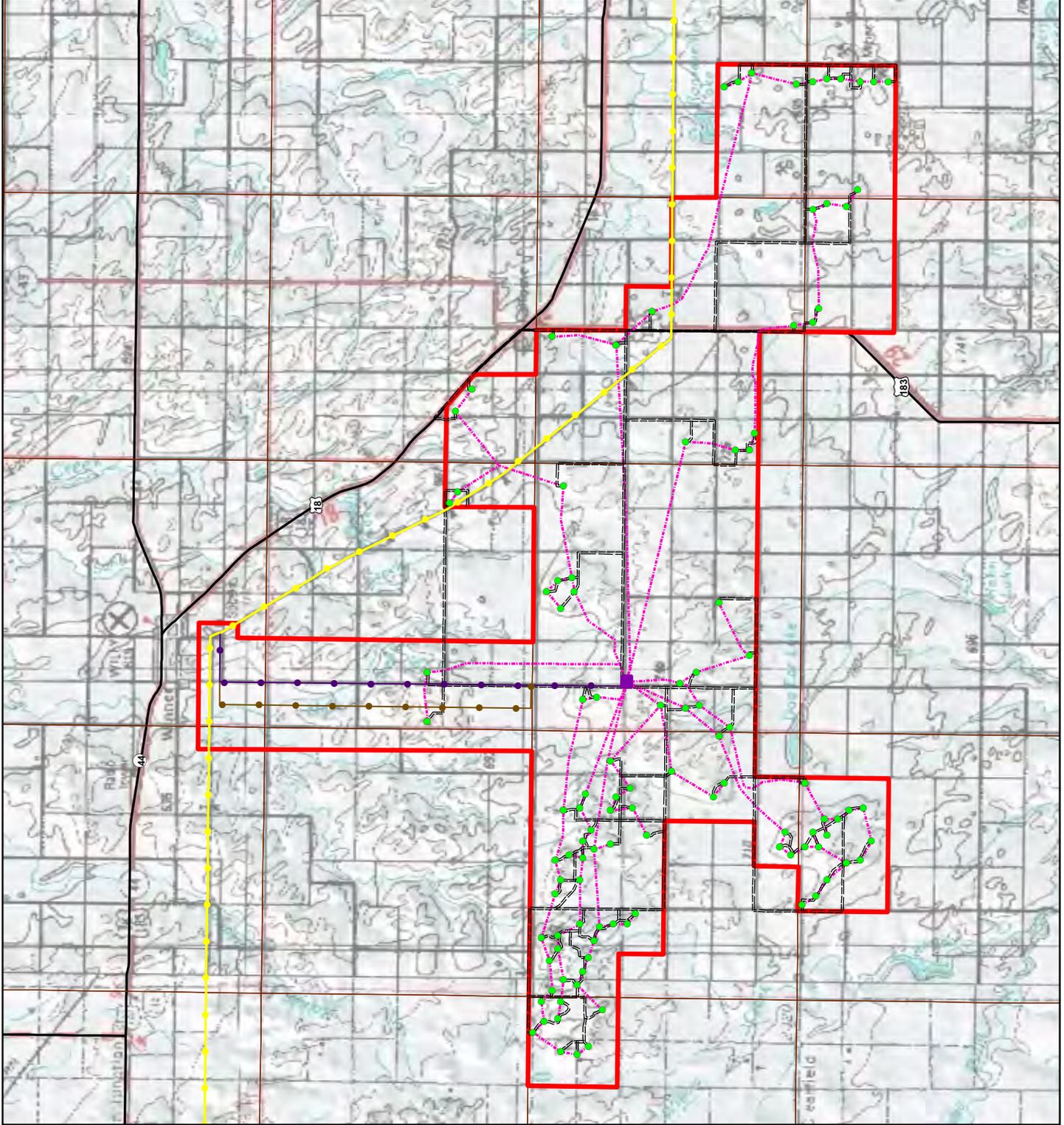
Overhead Transmission Line

-  Alternative 1
-  Alternative 2



SDPW Project

Figure 1.4



- Protecting Transmission System Reliability and Service to Existing Customers - Western must ensure that existing reliability and service is not degraded. Western's LGIP provides 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.

PrairieWinds 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 PrairieWinds' application.

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 has formally accepted to participate as a cooperating agency. All agencies, regardless of cooperating agency status, will be kept informed of the Proposed Project and receive updates as they become 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 APPLICANTS' 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.

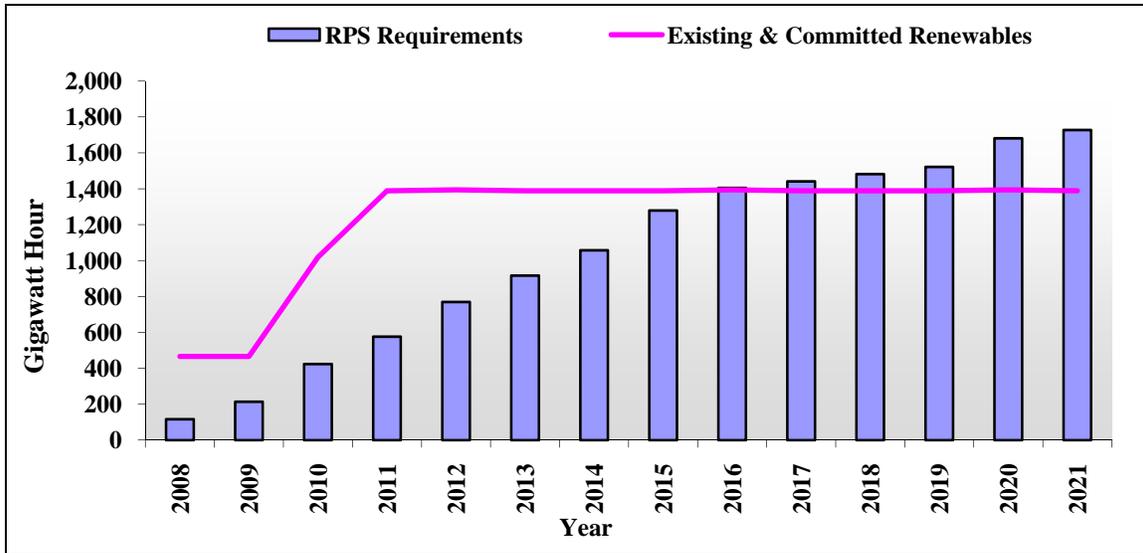


Figure 1.5 RPS Requirements and Existing/Proposed Renewable Energy Sources

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**.

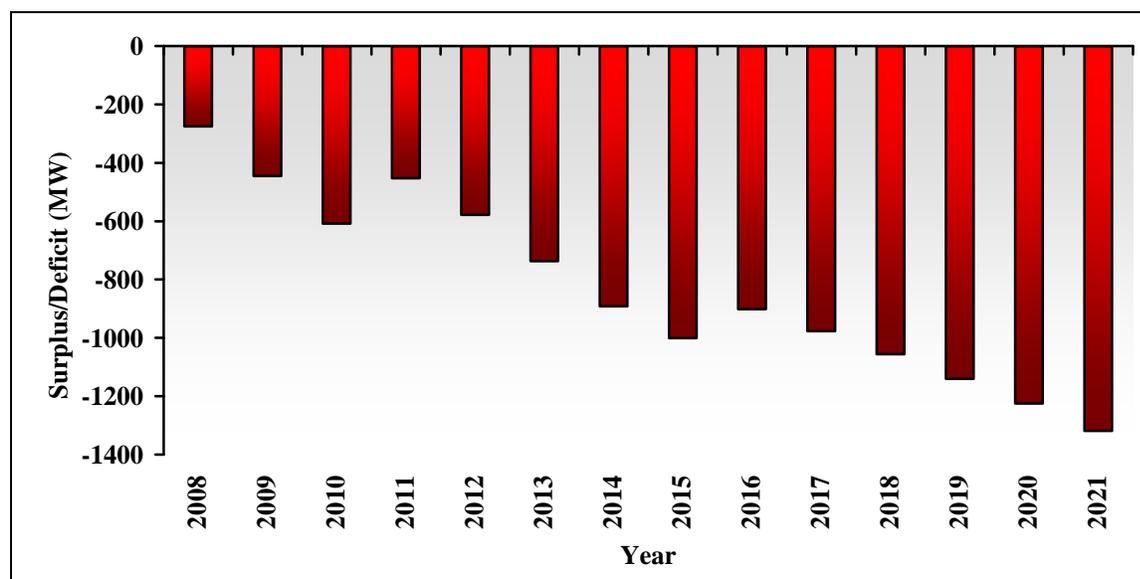


Figure 1.6 Total System Load and Capability

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.

1.3 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

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

Agency	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. Further investigation is required to determine USACE jurisdiction within the project area.
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)	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.

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.

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 and 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. 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. Additional future public participation opportunities will include project update mailings, review and comment on the DEIS and at least one public hearing. The information in the following sections summarizes the input that has been received on the Proposed Project through the end of the scoping process. Copies of the notices and meeting materials are included in **Appendix A** of this report.

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. All information presented at the meetings is available on Western's website:

<http://www.wapa.gov/transmission/sdprairiewinds.htm>.

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

1.5 COMMENT SUMMARY

A summary of the written comments received and issues identified through May 15, 2009, are included in **Table 1.3** (note that similar items have been grouped together). 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.

Table 1.3 Scoping Comment Summary

Issue	Comment	Treatment / Response
Air quality	Protection of air quality should be addressed.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Dust particulates from construction and on-going project activities are a concern; EIS should include dust control methods.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Alternatives	Preference for the proposed Crow Lake Alternative to be approved for the Proposed Project.	Comment noted.
	Preference for Crow Lake Alternative to be approved for the Proposed Project; also noted that site may cost less to build due to smaller acreage, and have higher wind potential.	Comment noted.
	Map request of the Crow Lake Alternative.	Map was provided.
	Summarize criteria and process used to develop Proposed Project alternatives, disclose reasoning used to eliminate alternatives.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Proposed Project alternatives map request.	Map was provided.
Aviation safety	Request for all project turbines to be lit at night as mitigation.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Biological resources	USFWS formally accepted invitation to participate as a cooperating agency.	Cooperating agency status confirmed.
	USFWS provided a list of Federally-protected species that may occur in the project area(s).	Species impact analysis will be provided in the EIS.
	USFWS provided wind turbine guidelines and considerations for meteorological towers and power lines with respect to sensitive species.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	USFWS provided discussion on wind energy and wildlife.	Comment noted.
	USFWS provided information on avian and bat protection plans, including the MBTA, or BGEPA, and information on birds of conservation concern, and U.S. Geological Survey avian research.	Avian and bat impact analysis will be provided in the EIS.
	South Dakota Game, Fish, and Parks (SDGFP) supports development of alternative sources of energy.	Comment noted.
	SDGFP suggested considering impacts, including mortality, from turbine strikes, habitat alteration, and behavior modification from improperly sited wind power projects.	Avian and bat impact analysis will be provided in the EIS.
	SDGFP noted previous correspondence with project representatives and information provided including SDGFP Natural Heritage Program data and information on unique and/or special resources or areas in the Proposed Project areas.	Comment noted; species impact analysis will be provided in the EIS.
	Identify endangered species potentially affected by the project.	Endangered species impact analysis to be included in the EIS.
	Disclose and evaluate effects of project activities on area ecology, vegetation, and wildlife and habitats.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Identify critical habitat and impacts on species and critical habitat.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Describe how project will meet ESA requirements.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Analyze migration corridors and flyways.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Disclose potential toxic hazards associated with pesticide or herbicide use.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.

Table 1.3 Scoping Comment Summary

Issue	Comment	Treatment / Response
Cultural resources	Identify potential cultural impacts.	Follow-up discussion with the commenter was conducted by project representatives. Comment will also be addressed in the EIS.
Cumulative impacts	EIS should examine cumulative impacts, including direct and indirect effects, including past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future activities.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Environmental Justice	Include potential impacts on low income, minority, and/or tribal communities.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Greenhouse gases and climate change	The EIS should include an estimate of annual greenhouse gas emissions expected during operations and describe the emissions in terms of carbon dioxide (CO ₂) equivalents in metric tons per year per MW hour produced; then compare to regional or State estimated emissions.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
NEPA process	Request that the environmental process be expedited.	Comment noted.
	National energy policies and national security in general are impacted by excessive oil import.	Comment noted.
	Commented that wind and other renewable projects are time sensitive, and should be implemented more quickly.	Comment noted.
	Support for wind energy development; noted that USFWS is an impediment to wind development; compliance with the USFWS approval process is a moving target and should be more easily acquired for wind energy projects.	Comment noted.
	Request to be added to project mailing list.	Information added to mailing list.
	Welcomed project representatives to the City of White Lake.	Comment noted.
	Provided encouragement for the project to move forward.	Comment noted.
	Representative from KWYR requested radio interview.	Follow-up discussion with the commenter was conducted by project representative.
Out of scope	Other developers have prompted individuals to sign land agreements.	Applicant responded to commenter.
	Commenter requested clarification on right-of-way details and easement compliance, requested information on land agreement expirations and payment guarantees.	
	Encouraged upgrading transmission lines through the areas to provide power access for other wind farm projects interested in the area.	Comment noted; the project as proposed is to build a wind-powered electric generation facility in central South Dakota, as such this comment is beyond the scope of this EIS.
	Request for transmission line upgrades in Gregory County to support wind energy development.	Comment noted; the project as proposed is to build a wind-powered electric generation facility in central South Dakota (not within Gregory County), as such this comment is beyond the scope of this EIS.
	Interest in supplying services/facilities during construction of the project.	Comment noted; information provided to Applicant.
	Volunteered land for wind turbine development.	Comment noted; information provided to Applicant.

Table 1.3 Scoping Comment Summary

Issue	Comment	Treatment / Response
Out of scope <i>(continued)</i>	Supports Proposed Project, and suggests improving local transmission infrastructure.	Comment noted. The project as proposed is to build a wind-powered electric generation facility in central South Dakota; as such this comment is beyond the scope of this EIS.
Project description	Request for information on the size, and height of the wind testers, number of testing sites in the study areas, acres of study areas, size and MW of proposed substation.	Much of this information was available in the scoping meeting materials and on the project website. Follow-up discussion with the commenter was conducted by project representatives. Comment will also be addressed in the EIS.
Scoping	Include construction, design, and operation practices that will be incorporated to protect water quality from erosion.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Inquired about the substation component of the Proposed Project.	Comment noted. Substation information can also be found in the NOI and will be included in the EIS.
Scoping	Welcomed the Proposed Project and was pleased with the presentation during the meetings.	Comment noted.
	Request project information.	Follow-up e-mail provided project information.
	Support for the Proposed Project, and would have preferred a formal presentation during the scoping meeting.	Comment noted; follow-up phone call with the commenter was conducted by project representatives.
	Bureau of Land Management (BLM) appreciates the opportunity to review and provide comments on the project, but that the agency does not have expertise or information relevant to the project.	Comment noted.
	Appreciated the meeting, found it interesting.	Comment noted.
	<i>South Dakota Mail</i> representative requested scoping meeting notice to be included in the local newspaper.	Comment noted and notice was included in <i>South Dakota Mail</i> .
Section 106 process	Request information regarding the scoping meetings. Are government agencies participating in Government-to-Government discussions with local Native American Tribes?	Comment noted, information provided. Follow-up discussion with the commenter was conducted by project representatives. Comment noted; the lead agencies have initiated the Government-to-Government consultations.
	Concern about notification to tribes regarding the scoping meetings.	Tribes were notified of the EIS scoping meetings in a letter dated April 13, 2009; Government-to-Government consultation will continue through the Section 106 process; tribal meetings began in August 2009.
	Northern Arapahoe Tribal Consultants offered archaeological services for the Proposed Project EIS analysis and Section 106.	Comment noted.

Table 1.3 Scoping Comment Summary

Issue	Comment	Treatment / Response
Visual resources	Provided information on the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail (NHT); requested that the EIS include analysis of the potential visual resource effects for both the Proposed Project alternatives in regards to the Lewis and Clark NHT.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Water resources	Clearly describe water bodies within the analysis area which may be impacted by project activities; analysis of area's geology, topography, soils and stream stability may be necessary.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
	Provide information on Clean Water Act (CWA) Section 303(d) impaired waters in project area, if any.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.
Wetlands / riparian areas	Identify potential wetlands both jurisdictional and non-jurisdictional, potential impacts, and least damaging practicable alternative for avoiding wetlands.	Comment will be addressed in the EIS.

--This page left intentionally blank--