

**Western Area Power
Administration**

Rail Tie Wind Project Scoping Report

SWCA Environmental Consultants

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RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT SCOPING REPORT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Introduction	1
1.1	Background.....	1
1.2	Project Goal	1
1.3	Project Location.....	1
1.4	Project Description	2
1.5	Document Organization.....	2
2	Public Scoping Process.....	5
2.1	Objectives	5
2.2	Advertising of Public Meetings	6
2.3	Public Scoping Meetings	6
2.4	Opportunities for Public Comment.....	7
2.5	Agency Coordination.....	7
2.6	Tribal Consultation	9
3	Scoping Content Analysis	9
3.1	Development of the Coding Structure	9
3.2	Database Analysis.....	10
3.3	Identification and Coding of Comments.....	11
3.4	Preparation of Scoping Report.....	11
4	Summary of Public Scoping Comments	11
4.1	Submittals Received	11
4.2	Comments Identified	12
4.3	Public Scoping Comments Topic Summary.....	13
4.3.1	National Environmental Policy Act Process.....	13
4.3.2	Project Description	14
4.3.3	Project Alternatives.....	14
4.3.4	Western Area Power Authority Purpose and Need.....	15
4.3.5	ConnectGen Goal and Objective	15
4.3.6	Regulatory Framework	16
4.3.7	Cooperating Agencies.....	16
4.3.8	Public Involvement.....	16
4.3.9	Aesthetics and Visual Resources	16
4.3.10	Air Quality and Climate.....	17
4.3.11	Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife and Special-Status Species	17
4.3.12	Avian Wildlife and Special-Status Species.....	19
4.3.13	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns.....	20
4.3.14	Geology, Soil, and Mineral Resources	21
4.3.15	Land Use.....	21
4.3.16	Public Health and Safety.....	22
4.3.17	Recreation Resources.....	23
4.3.18	Social and Economic Resources (including Environmental Justice).....	23
4.3.19	Transportation and Access.....	24
4.3.20	Vegetation and Special-Status Species	25
4.3.21	Wetlands and Water Resources	25
4.3.22	Wildland Fire	25
5	Future Steps in the National Environmental Policy Act Review Process.....	26

Appendices

- Appendix A. Scoping Notice
- Appendix B. Advertisements and Press Releases
- Appendix C. Scoping Meeting Handouts and Display Boards

Figures

Figure 1. General Project area map.....	3
Figure 2. Preliminary Project siting corridors (subject to revision).....	4
Figure 3. EIS process.	27

Tables

Table 1. Meeting Notification Methods and Dates	6
Table 2. Public Scoping Meeting Dates, Locations, and Attendance	7
Table 3. Agencies Contacted to Initiate Coordination.....	7
Table 4. Resource Topic Identification.....	9
Table 5. Distribution of Comments by Submittal Type.....	11
Table 6. Agencies and Organizations that Submitted Scoping Comments.....	12
Table 7. Distribution of Public Scoping Comments by Topic Category	12

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This scoping report was prepared by SWCA Environmental Consultants (SWCA) to summarize the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) scoping process for the Rail Tie Wind Project (Project) Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)(DOE/EIS-0441). The scoping period was conducted from publication of the notice of intent on December 30, 2019, through January 31, 2020.

The Project is a proposed utility-scale wind energy facility under development by ConnectGen Albany County LLC (ConnectGen). ConnectGen has made interconnection requests and transmission service requests for the proposed Project to Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) in accordance with WAPA's Open Access Transmission Service Tariff (Tariff) and the Federal Power Act (FPA), as amended.

ConnectGen proposes to construct and operate a wind power generation facility in Albany County, Wyoming. The proposed Project would interconnect with the WAPA transmission system with a new interconnection to the existing Ault-Craig 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line. The Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line is jointly owned by WAPA, the Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, and the Platte River Power Authority. WAPA is the designated transmission operator for the line and is responsible for processing and granting interconnection requests. In accordance with its Tariff, WAPA's consideration to grant an interconnection request is a Federal action subject to environmental review pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and associated U.S. Department of Energy and Council on Environmental Quality NEPA implementing regulations.

1.2 Project Goal

ConnectGen's goal for the proposed Project is to generate clean, renewable energy in response to increasing market demand. Thirty-seven states now have a renewable portfolio standard (RPS) or goal for the amount of electricity produced by renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar, biomass, and geothermal sources. In addition to the demand driven by state RPS mandates and clean energy goals, there is increased demand from western load-serving entities as a result of the low cost of wind energy and planned retirements of thermal generation plants. Many western utilities have announced ambitious plans to add large amounts of renewable energy to their portfolios in the coming years. These drivers of demand create a dynamic marketplace in which wind energy can be generated in one location and transmitted to another location in response to market conditions and power purchase agreements between the wind energy developer and the utility or large-scale consumer purchasing the electricity. The proposed Project is complementary to ConnectGen's renewable energy generation objectives and will contribute to the generation resource pool needed to meet future load and regional RPS requirements.

1.3 Project Location

The proposed Project is located in southeastern Albany County, Wyoming, and encompasses approximately 26,000 acres of ranchland on private land and Wyoming State Trust Land located on either side of U.S. Highway 287 near Tie Siding, Wyoming (Project area). The Project is located south of Laramie and north of the Colorado-Wyoming state line, and is within WAPA's Rocky Mountain Region, which operates in Arizona, Colorado, most of Wyoming, and portions of Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Utah. No federally managed lands are located within the Project area (figure 1).

1.4 Project Description

The proposed Project would have a generating capacity rating of up to 504 megawatts (MW) of renewable energy. For construction planning and site optimization, the proposed Project is physically defined as the West and East components, divided by U.S. Highway 287, each having planned generating capacity up to approximately 252 MW. Construction of the proposed Project is scheduled to begin in 2021 in the West component, and both components would be fully operational by the end of 2022. As is common with large wind projects, the proposed Project may require 2 years to fully construct. If additional time is required for construction, it is anticipated that the 252-MW West component would be completed first and fully operational by the end of 2022, with the East component operational in 2023.

The wind turbines would be arranged in collinear strings located within 1,000-foot-wide wind turbine siting corridors. Figure 2 depicts very preliminary turbine siting corridors developed for analysis purposes; these corridors are not final and are subject to revision based on the resource information currently being collected and the results of impact analysis. This corridor design approach provides flexibility in turbine placement during the design phase to avoid and minimize impacts to wetlands, water bodies, cultural sites, and other environmentally sensitive areas to the extent practicable. Access roads and electrical collection lines would also be located within the final corridors where feasible to consolidate ground disturbance and minimize the Project's overall footprint. For the portions of the proposed Project where it is not feasible to locate the access roads and electrical collection lines within the turbine string corridors, preliminary 100-foot and 50-foot-wide siting corridors, respectively, have been identified in these areas (see figure 2). The precise locations of each turbine within the corridor would be determined based on the wind turbine model selected and various siting criteria such as optimal wind speed, local geotechnical conditions, environmental considerations, landowner-requested setbacks, and other micro-siting factors.

Between 84 and 151 turbines would be included in the proposed Project. The total number of wind turbines would depend on the turbine model selected and final design. ConnectGen is currently considering several turbine models with capacities between 3 MW and 6 MW each. The selection of turbines for the final design takes several factors into consideration, including manufacturer production capacity, turbine technology, expected delivery times, cost, and other factors. Each turbine, with associated foundations and equipment, would have a permanent physical footprint of approximately 0.1 acre and a vertical height up to 675 feet, depending on the turbine type selected.

In accordance with NEPA regulations, the analysis of potential resource impacts from the Project will primarily be based on existing, publicly available information. To support this analysis, various studies and associated fieldwork will be conducted, as needed, including public scoping. These studies will include review of resources such as visual, land use, wildlife, listed species, and other environmental resources.

1.5 Document Organization

This document contains summary descriptions of the following:

- Scoping meetings, including public notices and advertising for the meetings
- Opportunities for public comment during the scoping period
- The scoping content analysis process, including how individual letters and comments were coded and recorded
- Comments received during the scoping period (December 30, 2019, to January 31, 2020), organized by resource

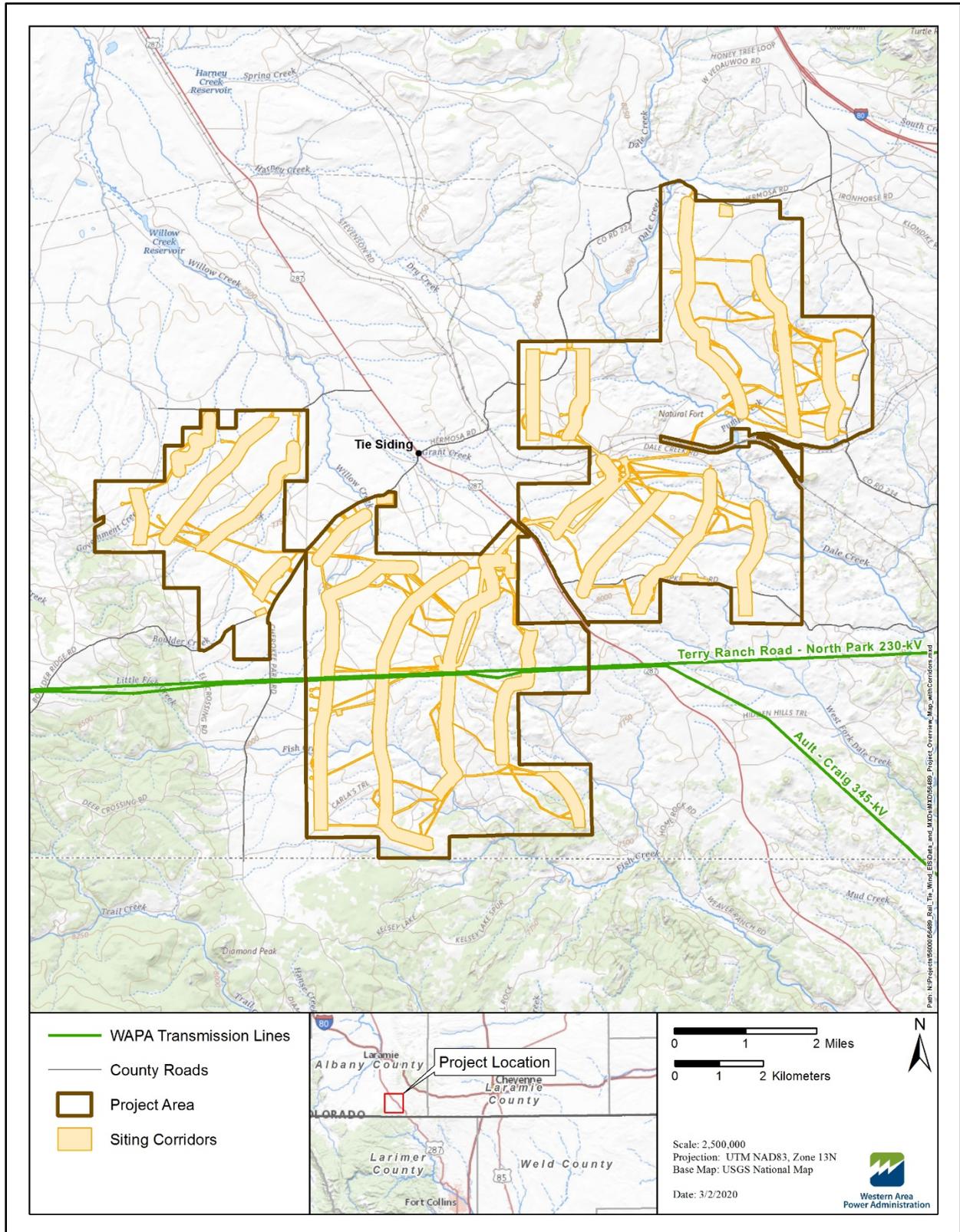


Figure 2. Preliminary Project siting corridors (subject to revision).

2 PUBLIC SCOPING PROCESS

The purpose of public scoping is to provide an opportunity for members of the public to learn about the proposed action and to share any comments they may have. For the purposes of this process, issues, concerns, questions, statements, and information conveyed will all be grouped under the term ‘comments’. Scoping is also an opportunity for interested parties to share local knowledge about specific areas or resources that the EIS process should consider. Input from the public scoping process is used to help WAPA identify the range of topics and concerns to be considered and questions to be answered during the NEPA process and focus the analysis on those of highest importance. In addition, the scoping process helps identify any topics that are not considered as important and can be eliminated from detailed future analysis. The list of stakeholders and other interested parties is also updated and expanded during the scoping process as additional parties are identified.

The notice of intent to prepare an EIS was published in the Federal Register on December 30, 2019.¹ This notice presented the proposed Project, announced the 32-day public comment (scoping) period, solicited public comment, and announced scheduled scoping meetings (appendix A).

The scoping process used for this proposed Project was initiated by mailing a description of the proposed action and invitation to the scoping meetings (appendix A) to the mailing list on December 30, 2019. The mailing list was comprised of names and addresses obtained from the Larimer and Albany County Assessors’ websites encompassing a 3-mile radius from the Project area boundary. The 32-day period for submitting scoping comments was from December 30, 2019, to January 31, 2020. Although the period for scoping comments ended on January 31, 2020, WAPA will continue to accept comments on the proposed project throughout the NEPA process.

2.1 Objectives

Scoping is the first step and an integral part of the NEPA process. It is an early and open process for determining the scope of topics to be addressed and for identifying the significant topics related to the proposed action (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1501.7). The objectives of the scoping process included the following:

- Increase public awareness and understanding of public lands stewardship through meaningful and productive constituent and local stakeholder involvement
- Engage Federal, State, local, and tribal governments and the public in the early identification of issues, questions, concerns, and potential impacts
- Identify potentially significant issues related to the proposed action
- Determine the scope (the range of analysis) and the significant topics to be analyzed in-depth in the NEPA process
- Identify and eliminate topics from detailed study that are not significant or that have been covered by prior environmental review
- Identify the scope of issues to be addressed and integrate analyses required by other environmental laws (e.g., Endangered Species Act, National Historic Preservation Act)
- Identify technical studies needed to adequately address the potential impacts of the proposed Project

¹ Western Area Power Administration, “Interconnection of the Proposed Rail Tie Wind Project, Wyoming (DOE/EIS-0543). *Federal Register* 84:71921-71923.

2.2 Advertising of Public Meetings

Pursuant to NEPA requirements, the scoping meetings were advertised in a variety of formats, beginning at least 2 weeks prior to their scheduled dates (table 1). In each format, the advertisements provided logistics, explained the purpose of the public meetings, gave the schedule for the public comment (scoping) period, outlined additional ways to comment, and provided methods for obtaining additional information (appendix B).

Table 1. Meeting Notification Methods and Dates

Publicity item	Publication and date
Notice of Intent (see appendix A)	Published in the Federal Register, December 30, 2019
Proposed Action Scoping Mailing (see appendix A)	WAPA stakeholder list, December 30, 2019
Advertisement (see appendix B)	The Fort Collins Coloradoan, January 12, 2020 The Laramie Boomerang, January 12, 2020 The Cheyenne Tribune Eagle, January 12, 2020
WAPA Project website	https://www.wapa.gov/transmission/EnvironmentalReviewNEPA/Pages/rail-tie-wind-project.aspx
WAPA news release	Provided to multiple news outlets, January 6, 2020

2.3 Public Scoping Meetings

WAPA hosted two public meetings in January 2020 at the Hilton Garden Inn Laramie, 2229 Grand Avenue, Laramie, Wyoming, 82070, as shown in table 2. At the meetings, the Project representatives provided brief summaries about the proposed Project. WAPA’s NEPA lead provided an overview of the agency’s process for implementing NEPA, WAPA’s role in the proposed Project, what constitutes a substantive and meaningful comment for the purposes of NEPA, and future opportunities for public involvement. The open house format, unlike a town hall format, was used because it allowed attendees to view informational displays, ask ConnectGen and WAPA staff questions about the proposed Project and the NEPA process, and either submit written comments on-site or pick up comment forms for later comment submittal. The open house format also allowed individual attendees to fully articulate their comments without interruption, allowed Project representatives to respond to questions, and allowed Project representatives to ask questions of their own to ensure that they completely understood each individual’s position. The one-on-one discussions that took place during the open house elicited specific, local information about resources and locations that is not available in published sources. This local information is often very important in aiding Project representatives as they work to reduce or eliminate potential Project impacts.

Members of the public were provided with fact sheets and visual displays to learn about the proposed Project details. Participants were also encouraged to join the mailing list. Copies of the meeting posters are provided in appendix C. The visual displays provided the following:

- A description of the proposed Project and the proposed Federal action
- Project location maps
- Information about potentially affected resources

- Visual simulations
- Information about the NEPA process

Table 2. Public Scoping Meeting Dates, Locations, and Attendance

Meeting location	Meeting date	Time of meeting	Number of people who signed in
Laramie, Wyoming	January 14, 2020	9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.	80
Laramie, Wyoming	January 14, 2020	5:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m.	82

2.4 Opportunities for Public Comment

Members of the public were afforded several methods for providing comments during the scoping period:

- Comments could be provided on comment forms at the scoping meetings. Comment forms (see appendix C) were provided to all meeting attendees and were available throughout the meeting room, where attendees could write and submit comments during the meeting.

Large maps of the Project area were provided for attendees to orient themselves with and identify areas of concern; map locations were keyed to written comments.

- Emailed comments could be sent to a dedicated email address: RailTieWind@wapa.gov.
- Individual letters and comment forms could be mailed via U.S. Postal Service to P.O. Box 281213, Lakewood, Colorado, 80228-8213.

All comments were given equal consideration, regardless of method of transmittal.

2.5 Agency Coordination

WAPA has contacted key Federal, State, county, and local agencies, as well as Native American tribes, to initiate coordination throughout the NEPA review process. Table 3 lists the agencies that WAPA has contacted as of the date of this report.

Table 3. Agencies Contacted to Initiate Coordination

Federal	State	Local
U.S. Forest Service	Colorado Air National Guard	Albany County Commissioners
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	Colorado Department of Natural Resources	Albany County Planning and Zoning
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency	Colorado Department of Transportation	Albany County Road and Bridge Department
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers	Colorado Parks and Wildlife	Larimer County Commissioners
U.S. Department of Agriculture	Colorado Geological Survey	Larimer County Department of Health and Environment

Federal	State	Local
U.S. Department of the Interior	Colorado Governor's Energy Office	Larimer County Department of Natural Resources
U.S. General Services Administration	Colorado Public Utilities Commission	Larimer County Department of Planning and Building Services
U.S. Department of the Interior	Colorado State Historic Preservation Office	Larimer County Department of Engineering
Federal Aviation Administration	State of Colorado Governor's Office	Larimer County Road and Bridge Department
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	University of Wyoming	City of Laramie Mayor
Bureau of Indian Affairs/Rocky Mountain Regional Office	Wyoming Business Council	Laramie Chamber Business Alliance
Bureau of Land Management—Wyoming State Office	Wyoming Department of Agriculture	Tie Siding Volunteer Fire Department
Federal Emergency Management Agency Region VIII	Wyoming Department of Education	–
Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	Wyoming Department of Environmental Quality	–
Federal Highway Administration	Wyoming Department of Health	–
National Park Service	Wyoming Department of Revenue	–
National Weather Service, Cheyenne, Wyoming	Wyoming Department of State Parks and Cultural Resources	–
Wyoming U.S. House of Representatives	Wyoming Environmental Quality Council	–
Wyoming U.S. Senators	Wyoming Infrastructure Authority	–
–	Wyoming Public Service Commission	–
–	Wyoming State Climate Office	–
–	Wyoming State Engineer's Office	–
–	Wyoming State Geological Survey	–
–	Wyoming Wildlife and Natural Resources Trust	–
–	Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office	–
–	Wyoming Department of Transportation	–
–	Wyoming Game and Fish Department	–
–	Wyoming Office of State Lands and Investments	–
–	Wyoming Office of Homeland Security	–
–	State of Wyoming Governor's Office	–

2.6 Tribal Consultation

WAPA is planning to conduct formal consultation with interested tribes on a government-to-government level, according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act. WAPA began informal coordination with the Crow Tribe, Eastern Shoshone Tribe, Northern Arapaho Tribe, and Northern Cheyenne Tribe through letter outreach prior to the public scoping meetings. Additional tribes that may potentially be interested in consulting on the Project have been identified and invited to be consulting parties. Formal tribal consultation will begin as the NEPA analysis begins and will be ongoing throughout the NEPA process. A summary of this tribal consultation process will be included in the NEPA documentation. Table 4 lists the Native American tribes that WAPA has contacted as of the date of this report.

3 SCOPING CONTENT ANALYSIS

There are four phases to the process used to analyze comments received during public scoping: (1) developing an comment coding structure, (2) importing into and organizing all scoping comment submittal content in a comment database, (3) carefully reading each submittal and assigning codes to substantive comments, and (4) preparing a narrative report of the results of the analysis. It is important to note that the comment analysis process is not and should not be considered a vote. Every effort was made to qualify the intensity of the public’s expressions, as determined by commenter’s choice of words. All comments were treated evenly and were not weighted organizational affiliation, “status” of the commenter, or other factors. Comments help to identify the scope of topics that need to be investigated, questions that need to be answered, and the number of similar comments is used to identify the topics of greatest importance to the interested public.

3.1 Development of the Coding Structure

Initially, a coding structure was developed to help sort comments, questions, and concerns into logical categories, specifically resources and planning processes applicable to the Project area. This coding structure was derived from an analysis of the range of topics uncovered during background research and evolved as submittals were read and relevant comments, questions, and concerns were identified. The use of these codes allows for quick access to comments on specific topics. Table 4 shows the resource categories that were determined to be most inclusive of the substantive comments received during public scoping.

Table 4. Resource Topic Identification

Resource topic	Resource category
National Environmental Policy Act Process	3.01.00
Project Description	3.02.00
Project Alternatives	3.03.00
WAPA Purpose and Need	3.04.00
ConnectGen Goals and Objectives	3.05.00

Resource topic	Resource category
Impact Minimization Measures	3.06.00
Regulatory Framework	3.07.00
Cooperating Agencies	3.08.00
Public Involvement	3.09.00
Aesthetics and Visual Resources	3.11.00
Air Quality and Climate	3.12.00
Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife and Special Status Species	3.13.00
Avian Wildlife and Special Status Species	3.14.00
Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns	3.15.00
Geology, Soil, and Mineral Resources	3.16.00
Land Use	3.17.00
Paleontological Resources	3.18.00
Public Health and Safety	3.19.00
Recreation Resources	3.20.00
Social and Economic Resources (including Environmental Justice)	3.21.00
Transportation and Access	3.22.00
Vegetation and Special Status Species	3.23.00
Wetlands and Water Resources	3.24.00
Wildland Fire	3.25.00
New Resource Concerns	3.27.00

3.2 Database Analysis

The second phase of the analysis process involved creating submittal records in a comments database for every submittal received. The commenter information and comment text were entered into the database. Each submittal was recorded in the database, where it was assigned a unique number and was then labeled with a commenter type code that indicated the entity from which it was received (i.e., “I” for individual; “G” for government agency; “O” for organization; or “T” for tribe). Submittals that included only a person’s name and any address information were coded as having been received from an individual. If an affiliation with a government (Federal, State, or local), tribe, or organization was included in the commenter information of a submittal, the submittal record was assigned to the corresponding commenter type category.

3.3 Identification and Coding of Comments

Once submittal records were coded for commenter and submittal types, each submittal was read carefully. Each individual statement identified as a relevant and substantive comment was assigned a resource category (see table 4). Each submittal could include multiple coded comments. This form of analysis allows for specific comments to be captured and then grouped under the umbrella of a general resource topic. It also allows for cross-referencing and comparison.

3.4 Preparation of Scoping Report

The final phase included identifying and summarizing topics of public concern and compiling them in this narrative report. The topics of concern are a compilation of comments received from the public and various agencies and organizations during public scoping. The intent of this compilation is to provide representative statements that capture, with minimal repetition, the comments expressed during the public comment period. The statements are not necessarily verbatim iterations of comments received but, in many cases, include similar or exact phrasing.

4 SUMMARY OF PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENTS

4.1 Submittals Received

In total, 142 submittals were collected during public scoping, none of which were “form letter” submittals. Table 5 illustrates the types of submittals received and their corresponding comment totals and percentages.

Table 5. Distribution of Comments by Submittal Type

Submittal type	Submittal total	Comment total ¹	Percent of total (comments)
Electronic	122	884	83%
Hand-delivered	9	19	2%
Letter	8	152	14%
Telephone	3	4	< 1
Total	142	1,059	100%

¹ Some comments applied to more than one category; total count reflects some double-counting.

Table 6 lists the number of submittals and comments by submitter type (individual, government, or organization). It also lists the agencies and organizations that submitted comments.

Table 6. Agencies and Organizations that Submitted Scoping Comments

Submitter type	Agency/Organization	Submittal count	Comment count ¹
Individual	N/A	123	859
Government	Albany County Planning Office Albany County Road and Bridge Department Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife Laramie Rivers Conservation District Office of the Wyoming Governor U.S. Forest Service, Laramie Ranger District U.S. Army Corps of Engineers U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service ² Wyoming Department of Transportation Wyoming Game and Fish Department	11	70
Organization	Audubon Rockies Buttes Homeowners Association ³ Colorado State University Research Foundation, Maxwell Ranch Heritage Mountain Landowners Association Rocky Mountain Raptor Program Sierra Club Wyoming Chapter The Wilderness Society	8	130
Total		142	1,059

¹ Some comments applied to more than one category; total count reflects some double-counting.

² The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service made two separate submittals.

³ The Buttes Homeowners Association made two separate submittals.

4.2 Comments Identified

In total, 753 comments were identified in the submittals received during public scoping. Some of those comments were coded in more than one category for a total of 1,059 coded comments. Table 7 shows the distribution of individual comments received by topic category.

Table 7. Distribution of Public Scoping Comments by Topic Category

Code	Description	Comment count ¹
3.01.00	NEPA Process	6
3.02.00	Project Description	60
3.03.00	Project Alternatives	23
3.04.00	WAPA Purpose and Need	28
3.05.00	ConnectGen Goal and Objectives	9
3.06.00	Impact Minimization Measures	54
3.07.00	Regulatory Framework	2
3.08.00	Cooperating Agencies	5
3.09.00	Public Involvement	20

Code	Description	Comment count ¹
3.11.00	Aesthetics and Visual Resources	115
3.12.00	Air Quality and Climate	17
3.13.00	Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife and Special-Status Species	125
3.14.00	Avian Wildlife and Special-Status Species	130
3.15.00	Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns	53
3.16.00	Geology, Soil, and Mineral Resources	11
3.17.00	Land Use	23
3.18.00	Paleontological Resources	0
3.19.00	Public Health and Safety	78
3.20.00	Recreation Resources	25
3.21.00	Social and Economic Resources (including Environmental Justice)	80
3.22.00	Transportation and Access	57
3.23.00	Vegetation and Special Status Species	34
3.24.00	Wetlands and Water Resources	36
3.25.00	Wildland Fire	6
3.27.00	New Resource Concerns	23
Total		1,059

¹ Some comments applied to more than one category; total count reflects some double-counting.

4.3 Public Scoping Comments Topic Summary

Individual comments were assigned to one or more of 26 topic categories (see table 4) based on the overall theme and topic of the comment. Below is a summary of these themes and topics. The primary issues, concerns, questions, and statements made with respect to each theme or topic are discussed below.

Comments coded **3.06.00 IMPACT MINIMIZATION MEASURES** included suggestions about ways to minimize potential effects of the proposed Project. These comments pertained to several resource topics (e.g., aesthetics and visual resources, aquatic and terrestrial wildlife, air quality and climate, public health and safety, etc.) and are described in the topic they pertain to.

There were no comments coded **3.18.00 PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES** and this topic is not addressed further in this report.

4.3.1 National Environmental Policy Act Process

Comments coded **3.01.00 NEPA PROCESS** addressed the process for the NEPA review. Comments included the following concerns and questions:

- The lead agency for the NEPA process is unclear.

- Required notifications may not have been sent to all residents
- Can the scoping period be extended until March 2020?

4.3.2 Project Description

Comments coded **3.02.00 PROJECT DESCRIPTION** addressed concerns about the parameters of the proposed Project. Comments included the following concerns:

- Current maps do not clearly explain where wind turbines will be placed or where transmission lines will be located. More detailed maps are needed.
- Computer simulations should be done to illustrate the potential for noise (audible and low frequency) and visual obstruction.
- The Project may someday expand beyond the current Project area.
- The Project, as currently described, is too vague. The number and height of turbines is not specified, collection lines may be aboveground or underground, and access road locations are not clear.
- Some Project components are going to be located in Colorado.
- The raw materials needed for each turbine and the batteries that may be used to store electricity on-site may not be recyclable.
- The use of off-shore wind turbines on land is unprecedented and may have adverse effects on people and the environment.
- The amount of electricity generated and the amount of time the turbines will be turning should be made clear.
- The ultimate users of the electricity generated by the proposed Project is unclear.

Commenters also requested additional documentation (e.g., studies, investigations, proposals, and other relevant information) about the proposed Project.

4.3.3 Project Alternatives

Comments coded **3.03.00 PROJECT ALTERNATIVES** included suggested alternatives to the proposed action. Suggestions included the following:

- Select the alternative that is the least impactful to the environment and viewsheds, including the Vedauwoo Recreation Area and Pole Mountain Unit viewsheds.
- Preserving historical aspects of Hermosa Road and moving the windmill corridors to the east and further away from the road.
- Exploring locations for the Project that are closer to loads and in states that prefer wind energy, and which do not directly affect existing first and second homes.
- No turbines within 1 mile of the edge of the forested area on the south end of the Project area.
- Fewer, larger turbines, with very minimal, low visibility access roads built as possible.
- Use better turbines/technology that are in service elsewhere.

- Relocate the Project to another place in Wyoming that is less inhabited, where the Project would be less visible, and that can bear the burden of a wind energy project, or locate the Project in Colorado, closer to wind energy electricity consumers.
- The Project is proposed in an excellent location because of the outstanding wind in the area.
- Build a solar project instead.
- Relocate the Project to a place where views have already been obstructed.
- Relocate the Project east where human density is reduced and use the Terry Ranch Road-North Park 230-kV transmission line.
- Locate turbines to the south and west of the railroad to avoid residences along the Interstate 80 corridor and Monument Road.

4.3.4 Western Area Power Authority Purpose and Need

Comments coded **3.04.00 WAPA PURPOSE AND NEED** included concerns about the purpose and need for the Project as presented in the scoping notice and at the scoping meetings. Comments included the following concerns and questions:

- The availability of space on the WAPA lines is critical and because of the closing of the Craig coal-powered plant, the timing is right.
- The Project is not contributing to the energy portfolio for Wyoming.
- The need for renewable energy in Colorado does not justify the impact to the viewshed from the Project in Wyoming.
- The 35-year lifespan of the Project does not offset the fossil fuels needed to construct the Project.
- The Project area is not well-suited for a wind farm.
- Taxpayer funds/subsidies may be the motivation for building the Project.
- Demand may not exist for additional wind energy because the power that would be generated by the Project has not yet been sold.
- How is the proposed Project acceptable when the proposed Hermosa wind project was called off and why is a wind energy project going forward when wind energy is banned or blocked in other counties and countries?

4.3.5 ConnectGen Goal and Objective

Comments coded **3.05.00 CONNECTGEN GOAL AND OBJECTIVE** expressed concerns about Project specifics. Comments included the following concerns:

- Details of the Project, such as the proposed number of turbines, turbine height, location of collection lines (above or below ground), and location of access roads is not specified.
- Details such as the Project's capacity for energy generation and who will ultimately purchase the electricity produced are unclear.
- Can ConnectGen can be trusted to manage the Project and will ConnectGen take responsibility for environmental impacts that could potentially occur (e.g., contaminated water).

4.3.6 Regulatory Framework

Comments coded **3.07.00 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK** addressed laws, regulations, and policy that may be applicable to the proposed Project. Comments included the following concerns:

- The Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act and Migratory Bird Treaty Act should be considered.
- Project proponents should work with the U.S Fish and Wildlife Service to incorporate avoidance and minimization measures into final turbine layout.
- Project proponents should apply for an Eagle Incidental Take Permit from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, if recommended.

4.3.7 Cooperating Agencies

Comments coded **3.08.00 COOPERATING AGENCIES** pertained to Federal, State, and local agencies who may cooperate on the development of an EIS for the proposed Project. Comments included the following statements:

- USFWS will be working with WAPA and ConnectGen on resource protection measures, including migratory birds and raptors.
- The Wyoming Department of Transportation requires a road use agreement to address damage to the highway system from Project activities.
- Governor Mark Gordon's office has submitted a request to act as a cooperating agency for the duration of the EIS.

4.3.8 Public Involvement

Comments coded **3.09.00 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT** pertained to meetings and notices used to engage with the public. Comments included the following concerns:

- The need for additional community meetings, with invitation/notice letters sent to all interested parties, in the spring/summer to allow property owners who spend the winter in other states to participate in person.
- Suggestions that newsletters or other written notices be used to keep stakeholders informed about the Project, development plans, and proposed mitigation.

4.3.9 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

Comments coded **3.11.00 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES** included concerns about seeing the Project and the potential impact that the Project would have on viewsheds, including night skies.

Comments included the following concerns and a request:

- Wind turbines or other Project components (access roads, maintenance buildings, fences, concrete) will be visible from residential homes and public roads, including U.S. Highway 287 and Interstate-80.
- During the night, blinking lights from wind turbines may be visible from residential homes and the university of Wyoming's Red Buttes Observatory. These aircraft warning lights may increase light pollution and diminish stargazing/astronomy opportunities.

- The view of the Ames Brothers Monument and the Laramie Valley may be obstructed by the Project.
- The Project will be visible from historic/recreation areas including Vedauwoo Recreation Area, the Ames Brothers Monument, the Cherokee Trail, the Overland Trail, the original Lincoln Highway route, the transcontinental railroad, and the Willow Creek/Dirty Woman Stagecoach Station.
- Concern that the wind turbines may cast moving shadows on the Ames Brothers Monument during the photographers’ “magic hours” for up to 2 hours before sundown for most of the year and maybe during the early afternoon.
- The request that radar-based proximity activation feature for aircraft warning lights be used so that lights are only activated when an aircraft is in the area, rather than having lights blink all night; and that red lights be used instead of white.

4.3.10 Air Quality and Climate

Comments coded **3.12.00 AIR QUALITY AND CLIMATE** addressed potential impacts to air quality from construction and maintenance activities, the effects of extreme weather events on Project operations and maintenance, and the potential for the Project to have cumulative impacts to the climate.

Comments included the following concerns:

- During cold weather events with cloud cover, ice could form on turbine blades.
- The area is prone to high winds and other extreme weather events (e.g., tornadoes, high winds, snow, and ice) that may cause frequent Project shutdowns, reducing its overall efficacy.
- Construction and maintenance activities will create dust and vehicle emissions that could decrease air quality for nearby residents. Dust-control measures should be used during Project construction that do not pose a risk to other drivers or vehicles. Vehicles used during Project construction should be maintained to comply with, and meet, emissions standards.
- The process of manufacturing Project components, transporting Project components to the Project area, construction of the Project, and operating the Project may create greenhouse gas emissions that, cumulatively, could contribute to climate change.

4.3.11 Aquatic and Terrestrial Wildlife and Special-Status Species

Comments coded **3.13.00 AQUATIC AND TERRESTRIAL WILDLIFE AND SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES** suggested that aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and special-status species analyzed for impacts should include Rocky Mountain elk (*Cervus elaphus nelson*), mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*), pronghorn (*Antilocapra americana*), moose (*Alces alces*), mountain lion (*Puma concolor*), bobcat (*Lynx rufus*), Canada lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), gray wolf (*Canis lupus*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), swift fox (*Vulpes velox*), black bear (*Ursus americanus*), American badger (*Taxidea taxus*), black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*), black-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys ludovicianus*), white-tailed prairie dog (*Cynomys leucurus*), North American beaver (*Castor canadensis*), North American porcupine (*Erethizon dorsatum*), marmot (*Marmota* spp.), weasel (*Mustela* spp.), American mink (*Neovison vison*), rabbits (*Sylvilagus* spp., *Lepus* spp.), brassy minnow (*Hybognathus hankinsoni*), common shiner (*Luxilus cornutus*), Wyoming toad (*Bufo baxteri*), Great Basin spadefoot (*Spea intermontane*), and other small mammal species and amphibian species.

Comments included the following concerns:

- How will noise, water use, and the spread of invasive species (caused by ground disturbance during construction) impact reintroduced black-footed ferret and reintroduced American bison (*Bison bison*) (i.e., buffalo) on nearby Soapstone Prairie?
- Where will water come from for Project activities and what will be the impact to local water resources and the species that live in them?
- The Project may result in reduced wildlife numbers and/or species diversity.
- Several species of big game (especially Rocky Mountain elk, mule deer, pronghorn, and moose) migrate through the Project area. These movements could be altered by Project construction and/or operations. This could create additional conflict with nearby hay-growing operations or reduce the availability of forage for cattle on nearby ranches. Disruptions to wildlife movements could negate the benefits of protected lands including the Boulder Ridge area, Pole Mountain Unit of the Medicine Bow-Routt National Forests, the proposed Pilot Hill open space, and Nature Conservancy easements in the Laramie Range.
- The area has been extensively studied for impacts to wildlife. Regulations will reduce the impacts of the Project on wildlife. Antelope will adapt quickly, deer will not be greatly affected, and the elk population has diminished recently partially because of the lack of cover resulting from the loss of pine trees.
- If wildlife are disrupted by Project activities, there could be an increase in wildlife-vehicle collisions on U.S. Highway 287; migration corridors under this roadway should be considered.
- Additional fencing associated with the Project could hinder wildlife movement, especially pronghorn antelope.
- Black bear may migrate through the Project area and their movements could be altered by Project construction and/or operations.
- Subsonic vibrations, noise, flicker, vibration levels, and lighting associated with Project construction and operations may negatively affect wildlife.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department made several specific recommendations for aquatic and terrestrial wildlife and special-status species, including the following:

- Completion of a Reconnaissance Level Assessment, or similar method, for the portion of the Project that occurs within the Harney Creek-Laramie River 5th level Hydrological Unit Code.
- Creation of habitat maps for Species of Greatest Conservation Concern (SGCN), including ephemeral drainages, perennial waters, vernal pools, and playas.
- Documentation of amphibians encountered incidentally during other wildlife surveys.
- If suitable habitat for SGCN amphibians is found in the Project area, coordinate with the Department of Fish and Game, conduct 2 years of pre-construction monitoring, and reclaim disturbed habitat sites.
- Pre-construction monitoring for swift fox dens.
- If construction activities occur within designated big game crucial winter range, no construction activities should occur between November 15 and April 30.
- More focused observations of big game movements in the Project area.
- Project personnel document incidental sightings of wildlife species.

4.3.12 Avian Wildlife and Special-Status Species

Comments coded **3.14.00 AVIAN WILDLIFE AND SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES** suggested that avian wildlife and special-status species analyzed for impacts should include American kestrel (*Falco sparverius*), bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*), blue grouse (*Dendragapus* spp.), burrowing owl (*Athene cunicularia*), Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), common barn owl (*Tyto alba*), Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*), eastern screech owl (*Megascops asio*), ferruginous hawk (*Buteo regalis*), golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), greater sage-grouse (*Centrocercus urophasianus*), great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), horned lark (*Eremophila alpestris*), long-eared owl (*Asio otus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), Northern goshawk (*Accipiter gentilis*), northern pygmy owl (*Glaucidium californicum*), northern saw-whet owl (*Aegolius acadicus*), peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), prairie falcon (*Falco mexicanus*), red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), rough-legged hawk (*Buteo lagopus*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*), and turkey vulture (*Cathartes aura*).

Comments included the following concerns:

- Hutton Lake National Wildlife Refuge is in proximity to the Project area, and the Project area is on the western boundary of the central flyway, thus migratory birds may be impacted through direct collisions with wind turbines or loss of habitat.
- Potential impacts to avian and bat species from collisions with wind turbines, meteorological tower guy wires, vehicles, and potential impacts from infrasound and low-frequency noise emitted by wind turbines.
- Bats and avian wildlife will experience additional risks from lighting, including disruption of nocturnal migration from flashing lights.
- Project may result in a loss of nesting habitat for mountain plover (*Charadrius montanus*).

Commenters made the following suggestions:

- The use of best practices to avoid bird collisions with turbine blades (e.g., taller turbines with shorter blades), meteorological towers, and guy wires, including the use of un-guyed tubular meteorological towers and raising the cut-in speeds of wind turbines (because bats are active at lower speeds).
- Identification of turbines with a propensity for bird collisions and curtailment during known periods of high collisions.
- Use of flashing red or white lights on wind turbines, meteorological towers, and communications towers, and the avoidance of sodium vapor lights is suggested because solid red lights and sodium vapor lights have been shown to attract active or migrating birds.
- Wildlife mitigation should occur in the sequential process of (1) avoid impacts to the greatest degree possible, (2) minimize unavoidable impacts, and (3) compensate for unavoidable impacts.

Comments include several specific recommendations for avian wildlife and special-status species, including the following:

- Identify and delineate potential foraging and roosting areas for bats by habitat type prior to construction and use this information to identify potential conflict areas with turbine siting.
- Conduct a post-construction habitat evaluation to identify changes to bat foraging and roosting habitats.

- Conduct North American Bat Monitoring Program surveys to identify resident bat species' presence and occupancy in the Project area and allow for trend analysis.
- Conduct passive acoustic surveys to identify and quantify bat species and relative abundance near the rotor sweep zone.
- Perform post-construction carcass searches to identify and quantify bat and bird species mortality and estimate mortality rates.
- Prior to construction, perform a risk assessment to determine concerns and identify potential conflicts with birds occurring in the Project area.
- Conduct point-counts in the Project area plus a 1-mile buffer from the Project area boundary during spring, autumn, and winter following Wyoming Game and Fish Department survey protocol standards to detect and monitor resident and migrant passerines.
- Conduct a 1-day-long survey for raptors each week during spring and autumn for 12 weeks, following Wyoming Game and Fish Department survey protocol standards.
- Conduct pre-construction monitoring for burrowing owl, long-billed curlew (*Numenius americanus*), and mountain plover.
- Develop a plan for 3 years of post-construction monitoring as part of the EIS process and make monitoring reports public.
- Work with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to incorporate avoidance and minimization measures into final turbine layout and apply for an Eagle Incidental Take Permit, if recommended.
- Avoid placing turbines near ridge tops, upwind sides of slopes, and canyons that are favorable for local and migratory raptor movements.
- Having discussions with the Rocky Mountain Raptor Program regarding transport and care of injured raptors within the Project area would be beneficial.

4.3.13 Cultural Resources and Native American Concerns

Comments coded **3.15.00 CULTURAL RESOURCES AND NATIVE AMERICAN CONCERNS** addressed several sites that may be within or near the Project area. Comments suggested that cultural resources be analyzed for impacts, including the following:

- Hermosa Road, the site of the original Lincoln Highway.
- Dale Creek Crossing/Dale Creek Bridge, on the National Register of Historic Places.
- 1849 Cherokee Trail/Overland Stage Route, from Laporte, Colorado, through the Tie Siding area on the west side of U.S. Highway 287.
- Willow Springs/Dirty Woman swing station, part of the Overland Stage road, west of Tie Siding.
- The original Union Pacific transcontinental railroad graded right-of-way from Old Sherman, located on the west side of U.S. Highway 287.
- The Tie Siding Cemetery, where there have been concerns about vandalism in recent years. Greater local development could impact the cemetery. Also, residents selected this location as their final resting place largely for its feeling of open, undisturbed prairie, and this should be maintained, and visibility of turbines completely minimized.

- Native American cultural and prehistoric sites including the bison jump kill site and religious sites in the Project area.
- The Ames Brothers Monument, a National Historic Landmark important to Albany County's cultural identity, will be compromised by the Project because the Project would be in the viewshed of the Ames Brothers Monument and could create shadow-flicker on the Ames Brothers Monument itself, altering the character of the site. In addition, a proposed trail from the Ames Brothers Monument to the Tie Siding Cemetery that includes the Dale Creek Trestle site would not be possible if the Project continues.

Commenters suggested the following:

- The Ames Brothers Monument should be out of sight of wind turbines through the establishment of a "protected zone" and that the Project does not diminish the auditory experience of Ames Brothers Monument visitors.
- That wind turbines be sited so that they will not cast shadows on the Ames Brothers Monument.
- That wind turbines be sited so the Ames Brothers Monument does not experience a shadow flicker effect.

4.3.14 Geology, Soil, and Mineral Resources

Comments coded **3.16.00 GEOLOGY, SOIL, AND MINERAL RESOURCES** addressed soil and geologic resources. Comments included the following concerns:

- The Project will permanently disturb natural rock formations and natural topographic features (e.g., hills, valleys, ponds, and springs).
- Wind tower projects have resulted in fracturing of bedrock from pile driving, adding turbidity to water wells.
- The bedrock in the Project area contains Kettle Point black shale and is known to contain arsenic and uranium. Vibrations from pile-driving may break up this toxic shale, contaminating groundwater.
- Substrates in the Project area (i.e., granite and oil and gas deposits) may be unsuitable for the Project.
- Fragile, erodible soils must be considered in reclamation.

4.3.15 Land Use

Comments coded **3.17.00 LAND USE** addressed the potential for the Project to affect the use of air space and public and private land. Comments included the following concerns:

- The Project area air space, used for military training exercises from Warren Air Force Base and the Air National Guard in Cheyenne, could be impacted.
- Man-camps may be constructed and run inside the Project boundary or on Wyoming State Land.
- The Project could result in illegal trespassing on private land and loss of privacy for residential properties.

4.3.16 **Public Health and Safety**

Comments coded **3.19.00 PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY** addressed risks to people working and living in the area during the construction and operations of the Project. Comments included the following concerns:

- Exposure to the noise (i.e., infrasound), vibrations, night lights, blinking lights, and flicker associated with wind turbines may cause issues with sleep, mood disorders, cancer, congenital abnormalities, tinnitus, nausea, headaches, and other health problems (i.e., wind turbine syndrome). The Project may also impact the health of area livestock. Analysis should include cumulative impact of noise, including sounds within the normal range of human hearing, and infrasound and low-frequency sounds, decibel linear measurement, and a-weighted decibel measurements.
- Will the turbines be located at least 1.5 miles from the nearest residential home?
- Turbine blades may fail and fall on top of a passing passenger car on Hermosa Road or any other public road. Will wind turbines be located far enough from the Project area boundary to prevent failed turbine blades from falling on passenger cars on public roads?
- Where and how will old wind turbine blades, oil, trash, sewage, and batteries be disposed of?
- The Sinclair oil pipeline is regularly inspected by aircraft and needs an appropriate setback (i.e., 0.50 mile) south of the pipeline.
- Snow accumulation in winter makes many roads in the Project area impassable (e.g., Hermosa Road) and, if a problem with turbines arises, could hinder emergency services response times, putting nearby residents at risk. Road construction associated with the Project may also delay or prevent emergency services vehicles from reaching residential homes and businesses.
- The Project is located along the direct route of the helicopter emergency medical service that flies between Laramie and higher-level hospitals along the front range and could be an obstacle in this direct flyway corridor.
- When wet, unimproved roads in the Project area are dangerous for tractor trailers with blades and tower columns to drive on.
- Deicing the turbines; ice fragments could be a safety hazard for nearby residents and property and to the turbines themselves.
- The proposed turbines are designed for offshore use, have not been used on land in the United States, and are dangerous and unsound for the purpose.
- An influx of construction workers will cause issues for the Albany County Sheriff and the Wyoming Highway Patrol; these organizations will need additional resources. Will temporary or permanent additional emergency services (e.g., firefighters, emergency medical technicians) be made available to the Project site and surrounding residents?
- The cost of needed additional training and equipment for local first responders to respond to emergency fire and rescue situations associated with wind turbines.
- Local ponds serve as the main source of water for the local volunteer and professional fire departments and depletion of these water sources would increase risk to homeowners and property.
- If the local water table is affected by Project construction, residential homes will be uninhabitable.

- Biologists performing post-construction carcass searches to estimate bat mortality rates should have received a rabies vaccination prior to conducting searches to minimize risk associated with handling dead or wounded bats.

4.3.17 Recreation Resources

Comments coded **3.20.00 RECREATION RESOURCES** addressed potential impacts to outdoor recreation opportunities near the Project area. Comments about recreation included the following concerns:

- The Project will take away from the use of recreation sites, including Vedauwoo Recreation Area, Pole Mountain Unit of the Laramie District, and the Headwaters Scenic Trail, for recreation activities such as hiking, hunting, fishing, camping, horseback riding, wildlife-viewing, rock climbing, and the enjoyment of nature.
- A loss of enjoyment from personal property.
- The Project would eliminate the prospect of a proposed trail from the Ames Brothers Monument to the Tie Siding Cemetery, including the Dale Creek Trestle site.
- Project personnel will occupy and/or use nearby recreational camp sites, reducing availability for residents and others and increasing litter and land impacts at those sites.
- The Project may impact elk, antelope, and mule deer migration and, therefore, hunting opportunities for these species.
- The Wyoming Game and Fish Department recommends maintaining hunting access in the Project area, with landowner permission, to avoid overcrowding on other public areas used for hunting.
- Recreation and camping at sites near the Project will be impacted by noise from Project operation.
- Tourists enter Wyoming via U.S. Highway 287 to access the Snowy Range Scenic Byway. The Project will change the view of the Laramie Valley and Snowy Range, giving tourists a negative impression of this area.

4.3.18 Social and Economic Resources (including Environmental Justice)

Comments coded **3.21.00 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES (INCLUDING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE)** addressed private property values and impacts to the local economy. Comments included the following concerns:

- Effects on the local economy during construction and for the lifetime of the Project; opportunities for job creation; will the electricity generated by the Project be taxed by Wyoming for the use of Wyoming land and wind to compensate for lost scenic views and impacts to birds and wildlife?
- The county will benefit from increased tax revenue. Some permanent jobs will result from required Project maintenance.
- Involved landowners will be compensated for the use of their land and the land will still be useable for ranching operations.
- Property values will decrease because wind turbines will be visible from residential properties and taxes will not go down to reflect that devaluation. Will homeowners be compensated for lost property value?

- Wind power is not economically viable without subsidies, and using tax dollars is objectionable. How much Federal funding is the Project receiving for construction and operations?
- What is the cost of maintaining and decommissioning the Project and who is paying for this? Required bonding or escrow accounts should be sufficient to provide for costs that may exceed current estimates.
- Fairness of private landowner lease negotiations.
- This Project, in combination with the Glade Reservoir Project, could open Larimer County, Colorado, to a massive explosion of population and unwelcome development.

4.3.19 Transportation and Access

Comments coded **3.22.00 TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS** addressed access to residences and public lands, road conditions, road maintenance, traffic, and permitting of transportation and roadway activities. Comments about access included the following concerns:

- Loss of public access to public lands, including Wyoming State Lands for recreation.
- The need to maintain access to residences for homeowners and emergency services vehicles, specifically access on Cherokee Park Road, Boulder Ridge Road, and Hermosa Road.

Concerns about the existing condition area roads including U.S. Highway 287, Cherokee Park Road, Hermosa Road, and Pumpkin Vine Road. Comments and concerns about road condition included the following:

- The need for road surface improvements to support oversized loads and for potential widening of roads to accommodate construction equipment and loads.
- That roads be restored to a condition as good or better than their condition before Project construction. Wyoming Department of Transportation officials commented on the need to restore disturbed areas to original conditions within the right-of-way.

Comments about road maintenance included the following:

- The costs of maintaining roads, including impacts to road fees for Fish Creek Ranch Preserve residents and the potential for increased maintenance load to Albany County Road and Bridge because of increased traffic volume on all county roads, and that department's already limited road maintenance budget. Albany County Road and Bridge officials commented on the need for a road maintenance agreement before construction can begin.
- Who will maintain Project roads, especially in heavy snow and drifting snow conditions. Cherokee Park Road and Hermosa Road were described as impassable for most of the winter and concerns included who will maintain these roads in winter and that road improvements would be needed to run specialized snow-removal equipment (e.g., Osh Kosh snow auger).

Comments about traffic included the following:

- Increased traffic on U.S. Highway 287 and Cherokee Park Road from Project personnel and construction vehicles will cause increased traffic volume and congestion, slower travel speeds and increased travel time, destruction of native vegetation, increased noise, and increased potential for accidents.
- Disruptions to year-round use of the Project area and migration patterns will increase collisions with wildlife.

Suggestions received to minimize effects to transportation included the following:

- A traffic study be completed with special attention to the construction season/busy (higher traffic) summer months and weekends.
- Inclusion of a new rail siding facility near the Project site to minimize truck traffic.
- Improve U.S. Highway 287 by completing a four-lane portion from the Project area to Laramie prior to the start of construction; adding left-turn lanes, passing lanes, and pullouts for parking oversized trucks in the Project area; and widening U.S. Highway 287 to accommodate oversized trucks.

Comments about transportation permitting noted the following:

- Work within the Wyoming Department of Transportation right-of-way will require permitting.
- Highway crossings will require a utility license (M-54) and have certain requirements.
- Operation/maintenance of roads will require access permits.
- A road use agreement with the Wyoming Department of Transportation will be needed to ensure that any damage caused by development to the highway system is addressed.

4.3.20 Vegetation and Special-Status Species

Comments coded **3.23.00 VEGETATION AND SPECIAL-STATUS SPECIES** suggested that the environmental analysis for the Project consider:

- Vegetation impacts from Project construction and operations, including control and management of noxious weeds.
- That reclamation plans be developed to address the needs of special-status species and to avoid the spread of invasive weed species such as cheatgrass (*Bromus tectorum*).

4.3.21 Wetlands and Water Resources

Comments coded **3.24.00 WETLANDS AND WATER RESOURCES** addressed concerns about impacts to water quality and quantity in surface water and groundwater, including:

- What are potential impacts to the water table/groundwater from construction of tower foundations, vibrations from turbines, chemical spills, and runoff; could disruption to groundwater lead to electrolysis and plumbing rot in homes?
- Will quantity of water available for agricultural operations (irrigated hay, cattle) and wildlife be affected by Project activities? What are the sources of water?
- Water resources noted to exist in the Project area include Dale Creek, ponds, natural springs, and the Willow Creek watershed.

4.3.22 Wildland Fire

Comments coded **3.25.00 WILDLAND FIRE** addressed increased potential for grassland and forest fire during Project construction and operation. Comments included the following concerns and questions:

- Commenters noted that the Project area is dry and prone to lightning strikes. How will lightning strikes to the turbines be mitigated?

- What is the increased fire risk during construction and operations? Should the Project be required to have a fire station of some kind?
- What systems will be in place, on-site, to prevent the spread of fire, should one start?

Comments also noted that fire is a significant concern because it promotes the spread of cheatgrass, an invasive grass species.

5 FUTURE STEPS IN THE NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT REVIEW PROCESS

WAPA will use the comments collected during scoping to define the topics and to address those topics, which will then be analyzed in the EIS process. The impacts that could result from implementing the proposed Project will be analyzed and documented in the EIS. Upon completion of the Draft EIS, it will be made available for public review and comment.

WAPA will consider comments on the proposed Project received at any time during the EIS process, but scoping comments received after January 31, 2020, may be too late to help shape the scoping process. Another opportunity for comment on the proposed Project will take place after the publication of the Draft EIS, at which time WAPA will hold public hearings and initiate another formal comment period (figure 3).

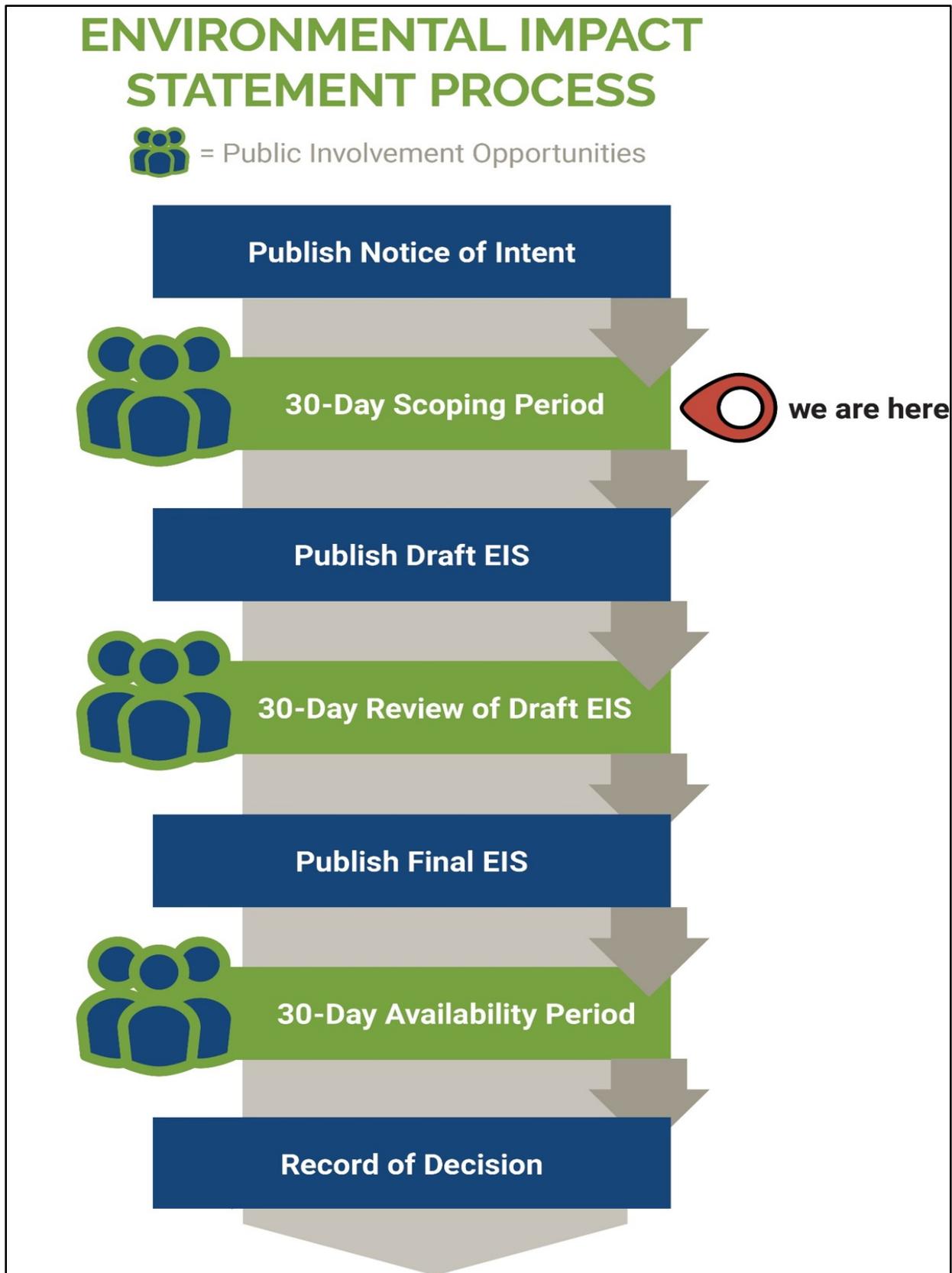


Figure 3. EIS process.

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APPENDIX A

Scoping Notice

The Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure require all intervenors filing documents with the Commission to serve a copy of that document on each person on the official service list for the project. Further, if an intervenor files comments or documents with the Commission relating to the merits of an issue that may affect the responsibilities of a particular resource agency, they must also serve a copy of the document on that resource agency.

k. *Description of Request:* The applicant requests a temporary variance to operate the reservoir elevation below its normal maximum elevation of 813.3 feet U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) datum, to prevent damage to a power canal embankment. The applicant would maintain a minimum elevation of 808.6 feet USGS datum from June 16 through the last day of February, and maintain a minimum elevation of 809.1 feet USGS datum from March 1 through June 15. The project would return to normal operation by the end of September 2020.

l. *Locations of the Applications:* A copy of the application is available for inspection and reproduction at the Commission's Public Reference Room, located at 888 First Street NE, Room 2A, Washington, DC 20426, or by calling (202) 502-8371. The filing may also be viewed on the Commission's website at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/elibrary.asp>. Enter the docket number excluding the last three digits in the docket number field to access the document. You may also register online at <http://www.ferc.gov/docs-filing/esubscription.asp> to be notified via email of new filings and issuances related to this or other pending projects. For assistance, call 1-866-208-3676 or email FERCOnlineSupport@ferc.gov, for TTY, call (202) 502-8659. A copy is also available for inspection and reproduction at the address in item (h) above.

m. Individuals desiring to be included on the Commission's mailing list should so indicate by writing to the Secretary of the Commission.

n. *Comments, Motions to Intervene, or Protests:* Anyone may submit comments, a motion to intervene, or a protest in accordance with the requirements of Rules of Practice and Procedure, 18 CFR 385.210, .211, .214. In determining the appropriate action to take, the Commission will consider all protests or other comments filed, but only those who file a motion to intervene in accordance with the Commission's Rules may become a party to the proceeding. Any comments, motions to intervene, or protests must be received on or before the specified

comment date for the particular application.

o. *Filing and Service of Responsive Documents:* Any filing must (1) bear in all capital letters the title COMMENTS, MOTION TO INTERVENE, or PROTEST as applicable; (2) set forth in the heading the name of the applicant and the project number(s) of the application to which the filing responds; (3) furnish the name, address, and telephone number of the person intervening or protesting; and (4) otherwise comply with the requirements of 18 CFR 385.2001 through 385.2005. All comments, motions to intervene, or protests must set forth their evidentiary basis. A copy of all other filings in reference to this application must be accompanied by proof of service on all persons listed in the service list prepared by the Commission in this proceeding, in accordance with 18 CFR 385.2010.

Dated: December 20, 2019.

Kimberly D. Bose,

Secretary.

[FR Doc. 2019-28121 Filed 12-27-19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6717-01-P

DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

Western Area Power Administration

Interconnection of the Proposed Rail Tie Wind Project, Wyoming (DOE/EIS-0543)

AGENCY: Western Area Power Administration, DOE.

ACTION: Notice of Intent to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement and to conduct scoping meetings; notice of floodplain and wetlands involvement.

SUMMARY: ConnectGen Albany County LLC applied to interconnect their proposed Rail Tie Wind Project (Project) with the Western Area Power Administration's (WAPA) existing Ault-Craig 345-kilovolt (kV) transmission line in Albany County, Wyoming. WAPA will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposal to interconnect the Project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) NEPA Implementing Procedures, and the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations for implementing NEPA. Portions of the proposed Project may affect floodplains and wetlands, so this Notice of Intent (NOI) also serves as a notice of proposed floodplain or wetland action in accordance with DOE floodplain and wetland environmental review requirements.

DATES: The public scoping period starts with the publication of this notice and ends on January 29, 2020. To initiate the public involvement process, informational/public scoping meetings will be held in Laramie, Wyoming, near the Project site. Public notice of the date, time, and place of the meetings will be posted on the Project website at <https://www.wapa.gov/transmission/EnvironmentalReviewNEPA/Pages/rail-tie-wind-project.aspx>. All known interested parties, agencies, tribes, and the public will be notified of the meetings directly via the Project mailing list, and via paid advertising, news releases, or other appropriate means. WAPA will consider all comments on the scope of the EIS received or postmarked by the end of the scoping period. The public is invited to submit comments on the proposed Project for WAPA's consideration at any time during the EIS process.

ADDRESSES: Oral or written comments may be provided at the public scoping meetings or mailed or emailed to Mark Wieringa, NEPA Document Manager, Headquarters, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 281213, Lakewood, CO 80228-8213, email RailTieWind@wapa.gov, telephone (720) 962-7448.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: For additional information on the scoping meeting, proposed Project, the EIS process, or to receive a copy of the Draft EIS when it is published, contact Mark Wieringa using the information above. For general information on DOE's NEPA review process, contact Brian Costner, Office of NEPA Policy and Compliance, GC-54, U.S. Department of Energy, 1000 Independence Avenue SW, Washington, DC 20585-0119, email AskNEPA@hq.doe.gov, telephone (202) 586-4600 or (800) 472-2756, facsimile (202) 586-7031.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: WAPA is a Federal power marketing administration within the DOE that markets and delivers Federal wholesale electric power (principally hydroelectric power) to municipalities, rural electric cooperatives, public utilities, irrigation districts, Federal and State agencies, and Native American tribes in 15 western and central States. The proposed Project would be located within WAPA's Rocky Mountain Region, which operates in Arizona, Colorado, most of Wyoming, and portions of Kansas, Nebraska, New Mexico, and Utah. ConnectGen applied to interconnect up to 504 megawatts (MW), via two 252-MW applications, with WAPA's existing Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line in Albany County,

Wyoming. The Ault-Craig transmission line passes through the proposed Project area, which is located south of Laramie and north of the Colorado state line, on either side of U.S. Highway 287. The proposed Project would be located on private and State lands; no federally-managed land would be affected. There are no designated cooperating agencies at this time, but cooperating agencies could be identified at a later date.

WAPA will prepare an EIS on the interconnection of the proposed Project in accordance with NEPA (42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*); DOE NEPA Implementing Procedures (10 CFR part 1021), and the CEQ regulations for implementing NEPA (40 CFR parts 1500–1508).

Purpose and Need for Agency Action

WAPA needs to consider ConnectGen's interconnection request under its Open Access Transmission Service Tariff (Tariff), which provides for open access to its transmission system through an interconnection if there is available capacity in the transmission system. This EIS will address WAPA's Federal action of interconnecting the proposed Project to WAPA's transmission system, constructing an interconnection switchyard on the existing Ault-Craig transmission line, and making any necessary system modifications to accommodate the interconnection of ConnectGen's proposed Project. Preliminary studies indicate that the power system can accommodate the proposed interconnection without negatively affecting system reliability or power deliveries to existing customers. The transmission system may require network and/or transmission system upgrades as determined in the final studies.

WAPA's Proposed Action

Subject to compliance with the provisions of the Tariff and after consideration of the impacts identified in the Final EIS, WAPA will consider approving ConnectGen's interconnection request and constructing a 345-kV interconnection switchyard on the Ault-Craig transmission line. By taking this action, power generated by the proposed Project would use WAPA's transmission system to reach the market. If WAPA's decision is to approve the interconnection request, WAPA would construct, own, operate, and maintain a 345-kV interconnection switchyard located adjacent to the Ault-Craig transmission line. The interconnection switchyard would consist of a line interconnection, switching equipment and breakers, a control house,

communications gear, supervisory control and data acquisition (SCADA) capability, and related equipment. The switchyard would be eight to ten acres in size, surfaced with gravel or crushed rock and enclosed by security fencing.

Alternatives

WAPA will evaluate location options for its interconnection switchyard within the proposed Project area along the existing Ault-Craig transmission line. Under the No Action Alternative, WAPA would not approve the interconnection request or construct the interconnection facility.

Applicant's Proposed Project

ConnectGen's proposed Project would consist of up to 84 to 151 wind turbine generators with a generating capability of 3 to 6 MW each, for a combined total generating capacity of up to 504 MW. The wind turbines would be located within an approximately 26,000-acre site in southeast Albany County, Wyoming, roughly centered on the town of Tie Siding and bisected by U.S. Highway 287. The turbines would be located in a varying number of generally north-south oriented strings of varying lengths, with the strings being approximately one-half mile apart. Separation between turbines, between turbine strings, and the number of turbine strings would vary with different turbine sizes. Each turbine would have a maximum height of up to 675 feet to the blade tip, and a permanent footprint including base, transformer, and associated pads of about one-tenth of an acre.

In addition to the turbines, temporary access roads and permanent all-weather access roads to each turbine location would be required. To the extent possible, existing roads and trails would be incorporated into the access road system and upgraded as necessary. It is estimated that approximately 60 miles of new permanent all-weather access roads would be needed for the proposed Project.

Two 345-kV Project substations, one on either side of U.S. Highway 287 would be constructed. The substation sites would be about five acres in size, and each would contain one or two main power transformers, breakers and switches, control buildings, SCADA and metering equipment, a permanent meteorological tower, and other related equipment. The substations would be gravel- or crushed rock-surfaced, and enclosed by security fencing. Approximately four miles of 345-kV single circuit transmission line would connect the two Project substations with WAPA's interconnection switchyard.

Up to 105 miles of 34.5-kV collection lines would connect the transformers at each turbine to the Project substations. The collection lines would typically be 34.5 kV, and would likely be a combination of buried electrical cables and overhead lines on poles 30 to 50 feet tall. To the extent practicable, the collection lines would parallel Project access roads to limit environmental disturbance and facilitate maintenance.

The proposed Project would also include eight 105-meter-tall permanent meteorological towers, four on either side of the highway, each located so as to best capture wind and other weather data. The towers would likely be of the self-supported, lattice-mast type, to eliminate the bird collision risk posed by guy wires.

An approximately 7,000-square-foot operations and maintenance (O&M) building would be constructed to support the proposed Project. The O&M building would include water, sanitary, and electrical services, and would house equipment for monitoring turbine operation and performance and a shop area for repair and maintenance. The O&M building would be located within an approximately five-acre security-fenced area, which would provide a secure yard for vehicle parking and spare components.

Several temporary laydown yards of approximately 15 acres each would be sited after biological and cultural resources surveys were completed to avoid sensitive areas. The sites would be temporarily gravel-surfaced and would serve as vehicle parking and staging areas for construction equipment and turbine and collection line components and materials. These sites would be reclaimed after completion of construction. Although mobile concrete mixing batch plants are not proposed at this time, it is possible they could be employed. As with the laydown yards, any batch plant sites would be surveyed before use, and reclaimed after construction was completed.

Although WAPA's Federal action is to consider the interconnection request and the physical interconnection to WAPA's existing transmission system, the EIS will also identify and analyze the environmental impacts of ConnectGen's entire proposed Project. ConnectGen would complete necessary coordination with State and local agencies to permit their proposed Project, while WAPA would be responsible for its interconnection switchyard.

Floodplain or Wetland Involvement

Since the proposed Project may involve action in floodplains or

wetlands, this NOI also serves as a notice of proposed floodplain or wetland action. The EIS will include a floodplain/wetland assessment and floodplain/wetland statement of findings following DOE regulations for compliance with floodplain and wetlands environmental review (10 CFR part 1022).

Environmental Issues

The location of the proposed Project is in a sparsely populated portion of southeastern Wyoming. Available overview information indicates this area has a relatively low probability of substantial natural resources conflicts. This information includes the 2012 Draft EIS for the Hermosa West Wind Energy Project (DOE/EIS-0438), which analyzed an area largely included in the proposed Project west of U.S. Highway 287. ConnectGen's siting process for the wind turbine strings and associated facilities will consider sensitive resources, and the proposed Project would be designed to avoid these areas. The EIS will evaluate the level of impact WAPA's proposed action and ConnectGen's proposed Project alternatives would have on environmental resources within the approximately 26,000-acre site, which may lead to modifications in the proposed Project to further avoid or minimize resource impacts. Although no substantive resource conflicts have been identified thus far, the EIS will analyze the potential impacts on potentially affected environmental resources. Wind turbine power generation projects are generally known to have visual and noise effects, and may affect birds and bats.

Public Participation

Interested parties are invited to participate in the scoping process to help define the important resources and issues to be analyzed in depth, and to eliminate from detailed study issues that are not pertinent. The scoping process will involve all interested agencies (Federal, State, county, and local), Native American tribes, public interest groups, businesses, affected landowners, and individual members of the public.

WAPA will consult with potentially affected tribes to jointly evaluate and address the potential Project effects on cultural resources, traditional cultural properties, or other resources important to the tribes. These consultations will be conducted in accordance with Executive Order 13175, *Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal*

Governments (65 FR 67249), the President's memorandum of April 29, 1994, *Government-to-Government Relations with Native American Tribal Governments* (59 FR 22951), DOE-specific guidance on tribal interactions, and applicable natural and cultural resources laws and regulations.

Public informational/scoping meetings will be held as described under **DATES** and **ADDRESSES** sections at the beginning of this notice. The meetings will be informal, and attendees will be able to speak directly with WAPA and ConnectGen representatives about the proposed Project. The public is encouraged to provide information and comments on issues it believes WAPA should address in the EIS. Comments may be broad in nature or restricted to specific areas of concern, but should be directly relevant to Project issues, the NEPA process, or expected resource impacts. After gathering comments on the scope of the EIS during the 30-day scoping period, WAPA will address the issues raised in the EIS. Comments on WAPA's proposed action and ConnectGen's proposed Project will be accepted and considered at any time during the EIS process, and may be directed to WAPA as described under the **ADDRESSES** section.

WAPA's EIS process will include the public scoping meetings; consultation and coordination with appropriate Federal, State, county, and local agencies and tribal governments; involvement with affected landowners; distribution of and public review and comment on the Draft EIS; a public hearing or hearings on the Draft EIS; distribution of a published Final EIS; and publication of WAPA's Record of Decision in the **Federal Register**.

Dated: December 17, 2019.

Mark A. Gabriel,
Administrator.

[FR Doc. 2019-28222 Filed 12-27-19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6450-01-P

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

[FRL-10003-84-Region 6]

Underground Injection Control Program; Hazardous Waste Injection Restrictions; Petition for Exemption Reissuance—Class I Hazardous Waste Injection; Great Lakes Chemical Corporation (GLCC) El Dorado, Arkansas Facility

AGENCY: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

ACTION: Notice of a final decision on a UIC no migration petition reissuance.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that a reissuance of an exemption to the Land Disposal Restrictions, under the 1984 Hazardous and Solid Waste Amendments to the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, has been granted to GLCC for two Class I hazardous waste injection wells located at their El Dorado, Arkansas facility. The company has adequately demonstrated to the satisfaction of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) by the petition reissuance application and supporting documentation that, to a reasonable degree of certainty, there will be no migration of hazardous constituents from the injection zone for as long as the waste remains hazardous. This final decision allows the underground injection by GLCC of the specific restricted hazardous wastes identified in this exemption reissuance request, into Class I hazardous waste injection wells WDW-5 and WDW-6 until December 31, 2026, unless the EPA moves to terminate this exemption. Additional conditions included in this final decision may be reviewed by contacting the EPA Region 6 Ground Water/UIC Section. A public notice was issued October 7, 2019, and the public comment period closed on November 22, 2019, and no comments were received. This decision constitutes final Agency action and there is no Administrative appeal.

DATES: This action is effective as of December 12, 2019.

ADDRESSES: Copies of the petition reissuance and all pertinent information relating thereto are on file at the following location: Environmental Protection Agency, Region 6, Water Division, Safe Drinking Water Branch (6WDD), 1201 Elm Street, Suite 500, Dallas, Texas 75270-2102.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Philip Dellinger, Chief, Ground Water/UIC Section, EPA—Region 6, telephone (214) 665-8324.

Dated: December 12, 2019.

James R. Brown,
Associate Director, Safe Drinking Water Branch.

[FR Doc. 2019-28209 Filed 12-27-19; 8:45 am]

BILLING CODE 6560-50-P

APPENDIX B

Advertisements and Press Releases

WE WANT YOUR INPUT

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT SCOPING MEETINGS

TUESDAY, JAN. 14, 2020

9:00am to noon

5:00pm to 8:00pm

with *project presentations*
at **9:30am** and **5:30pm**

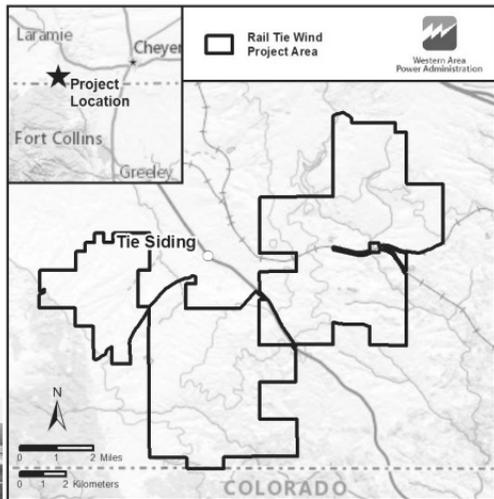
HILTON GARDEN INN LARAMIE
2229 GRAND AVENUE
LARAMIE, WY 82070

Western Area Power Administration (WAPA) is evaluating a request from ConnectGen Albany County LLC (ConnectGen) to interconnect their proposed Rail Tie Wind Project with WAPA's existing Ault-Craig 345-kilovolt transmission line in Albany County, Wyoming. WAPA will prepare an environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed interconnection in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969.

ConnectGen's proposed project would have a combined total generating capacity of up to 504 megawatts. Up to 151 wind turbines would be located within an approximately 26,000-acre site in southeast Albany County, Wyoming, roughly centered on the town of Tie Siding and bisected by U.S. Highway 287.

You are invited to submit comments on scoping the EIS, orally or in writing, on which issues and resources are important and deserve greater analysis in the EIS and which are of lesser importance. You may submit the comments at the scoping meetings or to the point of contact listed on the project website.

For more information, visit the project website: <https://www.wapa.gov/transmission/EnvironmentalReviewNEPA/Pages/rail-tie-wind-project.asp>



NEWS Release

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Jan. 6, 2020

CONTACT: Eric Barendsen, mediarelations@wapa.gov, 720-962-7411

WAPA TO HOLD PUBLIC SCOPING MEETINGS ON THE RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT EIS

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – Western Area Power Administration has scheduled two public scoping meetings Jan. 14 in Laramie, Wyoming, to describe the proposed Rail Tie Wind Project, identify the issues and environmental resources most important to the public and answer questions.

Public meeting details

- Date: Jan. 14
- *Meeting 1*: 9 a.m.-noon
- *Meeting 2*: 5-8 p.m.
- Location: Hilton Garden Inn Laramie
2229 Grand Ave.
Laramie, WY 82070

There will be a project presentation at 9:30 a.m. and 5:30 p.m.

WAPA is evaluating an interconnection request submitted by ConnectGen Albany County LLC (ConnectGen) to connect the Rail Tie Wind Project to WAPA's existing Ault-Craig 345-kilovolt line in Albany County, Wyoming.

Because this project involves an action by the federal government, WAPA will prepare an environmental impact statement for the interconnection request and proposed wind project in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The public meetings constitute part of a 30-day scoping process that began with a [notice of intent](#) published Dec. 30 in the *Federal Register* and ends Jan. 31.

During the scoping process, the public, interested parties and other agencies are invited to provide input on which issues and resources are important and deserve greater analysis in the EIS and which are of lesser importance.

In addition to submitting comments at the public meetings, the public may also submit comments on the scope of the proposed project through Jan. 31 to the point of contact listed on the [project website](#).

The proposed Rail Tie Wind Project, which would be owned by ConnectGen, would include up to 151 wind turbines with a generating capacity of up to 504 megawatts. The wind project would be located on an approximately 26,000-acre site roughly centered on the town of Tie Siding and bisected by U.S. Highway 287.

In addition to the turbines, the proposed project would include access roads, collection lines, substations, control buildings, meteorological towers and other related infrastructure. If WAPA decides to approve the interconnection request after the environmental process is complete, WAPA would construct, own, operate and maintain a connection with the existing transmission line and a switchyard to control power flow onto the existing line. More information is available on WAPA's [project website](#).

Learn more about the [NEPA process](#) at the Department of Energy website.

Full links:

Notice of intent:

<https://www.wapa.gov/transmission/EnvironmentalReviewNEPA/Documents/rail-tie-notice-of-intent.pdf>

Rail Tie Wind Project webpage:

<https://www.wapa.gov/transmission/EnvironmentalReviewNEPA/Pages/rail-tie-wind-project.aspx>

NEPA process webpage: <https://www.energy.gov/nepa/office-nepa-policy-and-compliance>

-###-

About WAPA: Western Area Power Administration annually markets and transmits more than 25,000 gigawatt-hours of clean, renewable power from 56 federal hydroelectric powerplants owned and operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and International Boundary and Water Commission in 15 western and central states. It is part of the Department of Energy. Follow us on Twitter [@WesternAreaPowr](#), or visit the website at www.wapa.gov.

APPENDIX C

Scoping Meeting Handouts and Display Boards

Please fold this comment form letter-style and tape here (do not staple).



Western Area
Power Administration

P.O. Box 281213

Lakewood, CO 80228-8213

Mark J. Wieringa
Rail Tie Wind Project
Western Area Power Administration
Headquarters Office, A9402
P.O. Box 281213
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213

Please submit your comments by

- email: RailTieWind@wapa.gov
- regular mail

Please tell us how we can reach you:

Name: _____

Address: _____

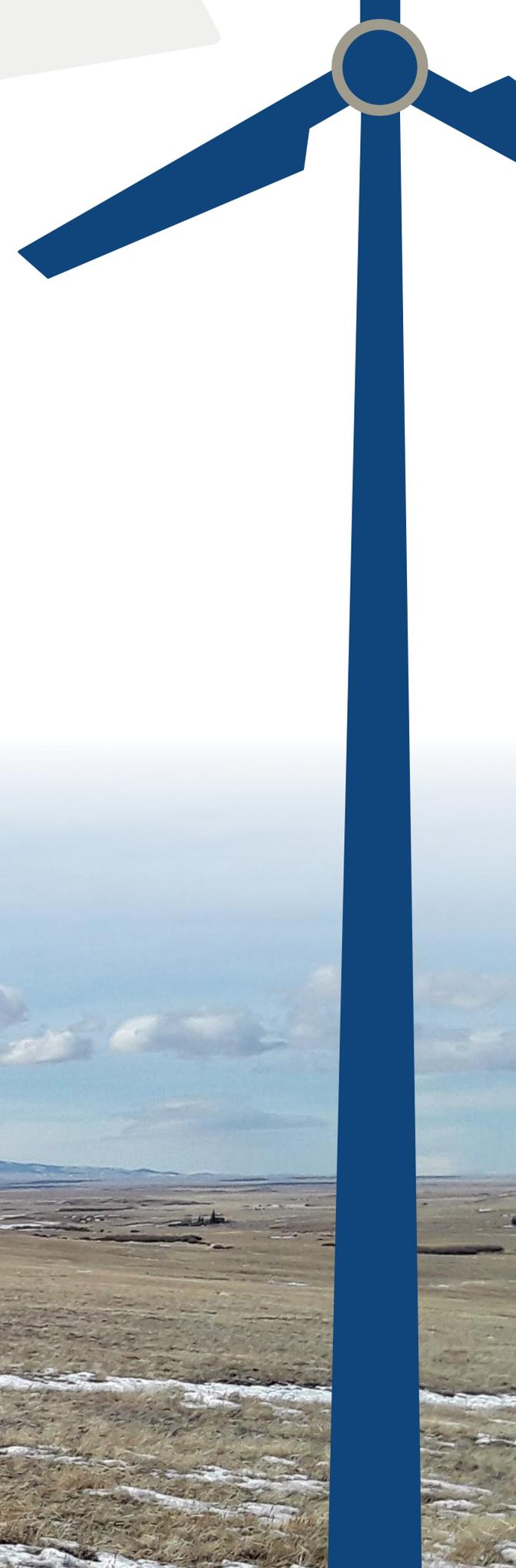
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Your personal information may become part of the project record.
Please mail this form with your personal information facing in.

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

NEPA PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

HILTON GARDEN INN, LARAMIE, WYOMING
JANUARY 14, 2020



PROJECT DESCRIPTION

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Rail Tie Wind Project (Project) is a utility-scale wind energy generation facility being developed by ConnectGen Albany County LLC (ConnectGen) in Albany County, Wyoming.

- **Location:** Near Tie Siding, Project Area is bisected by U.S. Highway 287
- **Nameplate capacity:** 504 megawatts
- **Project area:** 26,000 acres of private and state land
- **Interconnection:** Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line jointly owned by Western Area Power Administration, Tri-State, and Platte River Power Authority

CONNECTGEN OVERVIEW

ConnectGen is an independent renewable energy company focused on the development of greenfield wind, solar, and energy storage projects across the United States. ConnectGen is headquartered in Houston, Texas, and backed by Quantum Energy Partners.

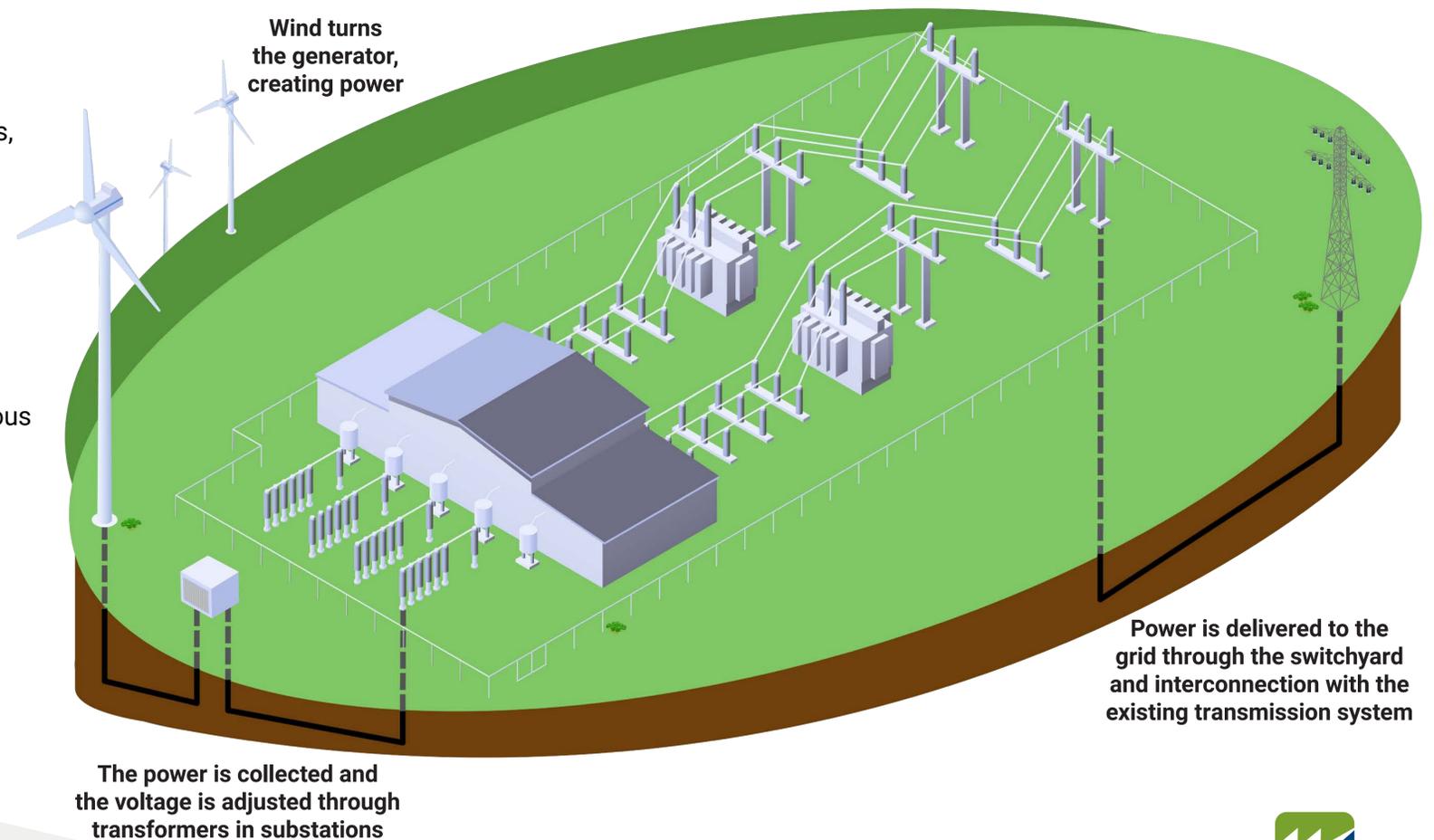
GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

ConnectGen's purpose for the proposed Project is to respond to increasing market demand for sources of renewable energy. Demand for renewable energy is primarily driven by the rapidly falling costs of wind- and solar-generated electricity and state clean energy mandates. Many western utilities have announced ambitious plans to add large amounts of renewable energy to their portfolios in the coming years.

FACILITY DESCRIPTION

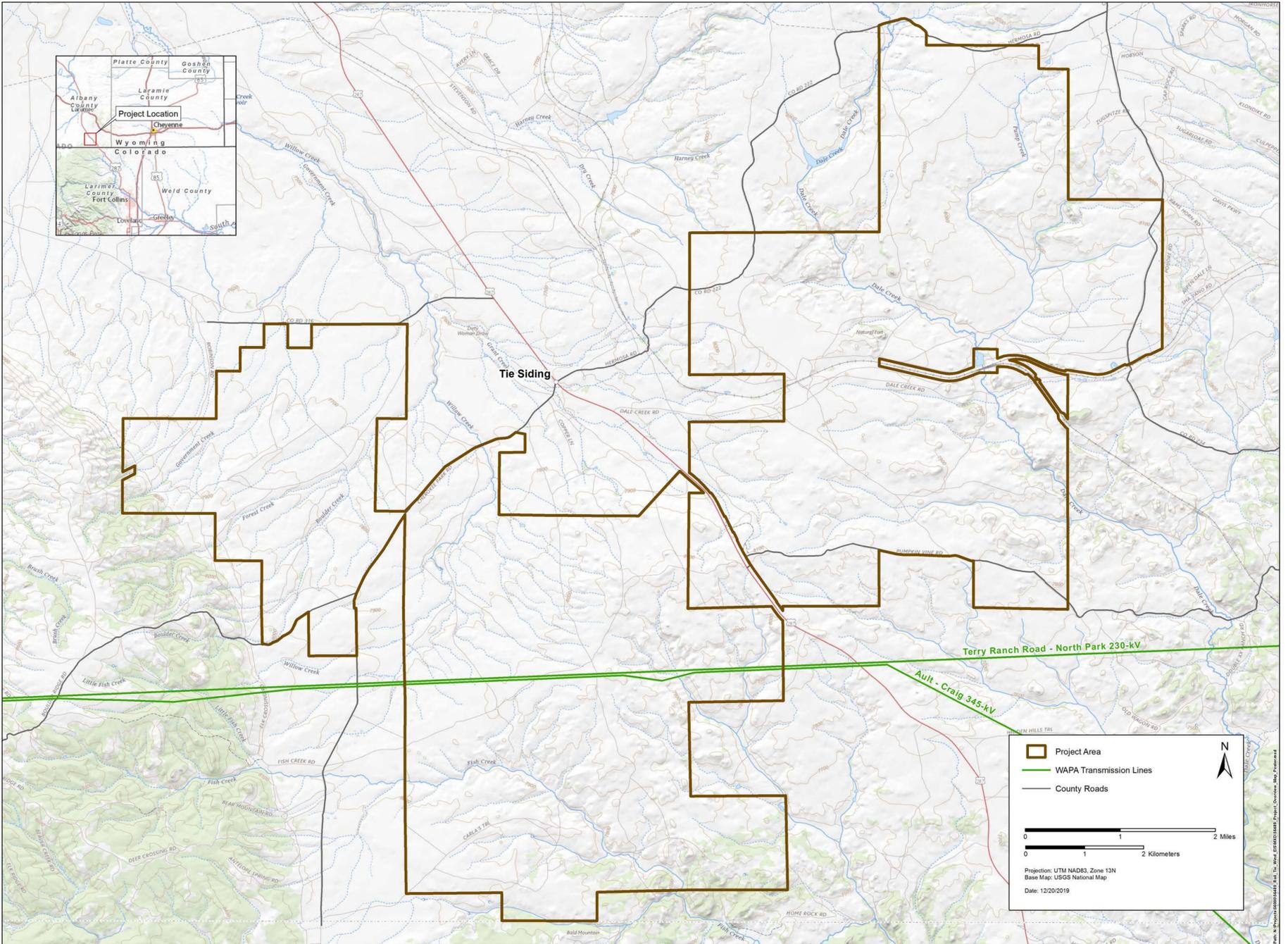
The proposed Project would consist of 84 to 151 wind turbines with a combined energy generating capacity of up to 504 megawatts of electricity, enough to power more than 180,000 homes. In addition to wind turbines, the Project is anticipated to include:

- **Access roads**
- **Collection lines**
- **Substations**
- **Interconnection switchyard**
- **345-kV transmission gen-tie line**
- **Operations and maintenance building**
- **Meteorological towers**
- **Construction laydown yards**



PROJECT LOCATION

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT



PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

TOTAL OUTPUT CAPACITY	504 MW
PROJECT AREA	26,000 ACRES

Turbine Generators	Output	3 MW–6 MW
	Count	84–151
	Overall Height	up to 675 feet
	Nacelle Height	up to 410 feet
	Blade Length	up to 272 feet
Collection Lines	34.5 kV	80 miles, primarily underground; if overhead, 50- to 80-foot-tall structures
Substations	2 substations – 345 kV each	5 acres each
Transmission Lines	345 kV	4 miles, up to 125 feet tall
Interconnection Switchyard	1 site – 345 kV	8 acres
Operations & Maintenance Facility	7,000-square-foot building	5 acres
Access Roads	All-weather; new, improved, and existing	60 miles, 20-foot-wide travel surface
Meteorological Towers	3 – self-supported lattice-mast	105 meter tall
Construction Laydown Yards	2 – temporary	15 acres each

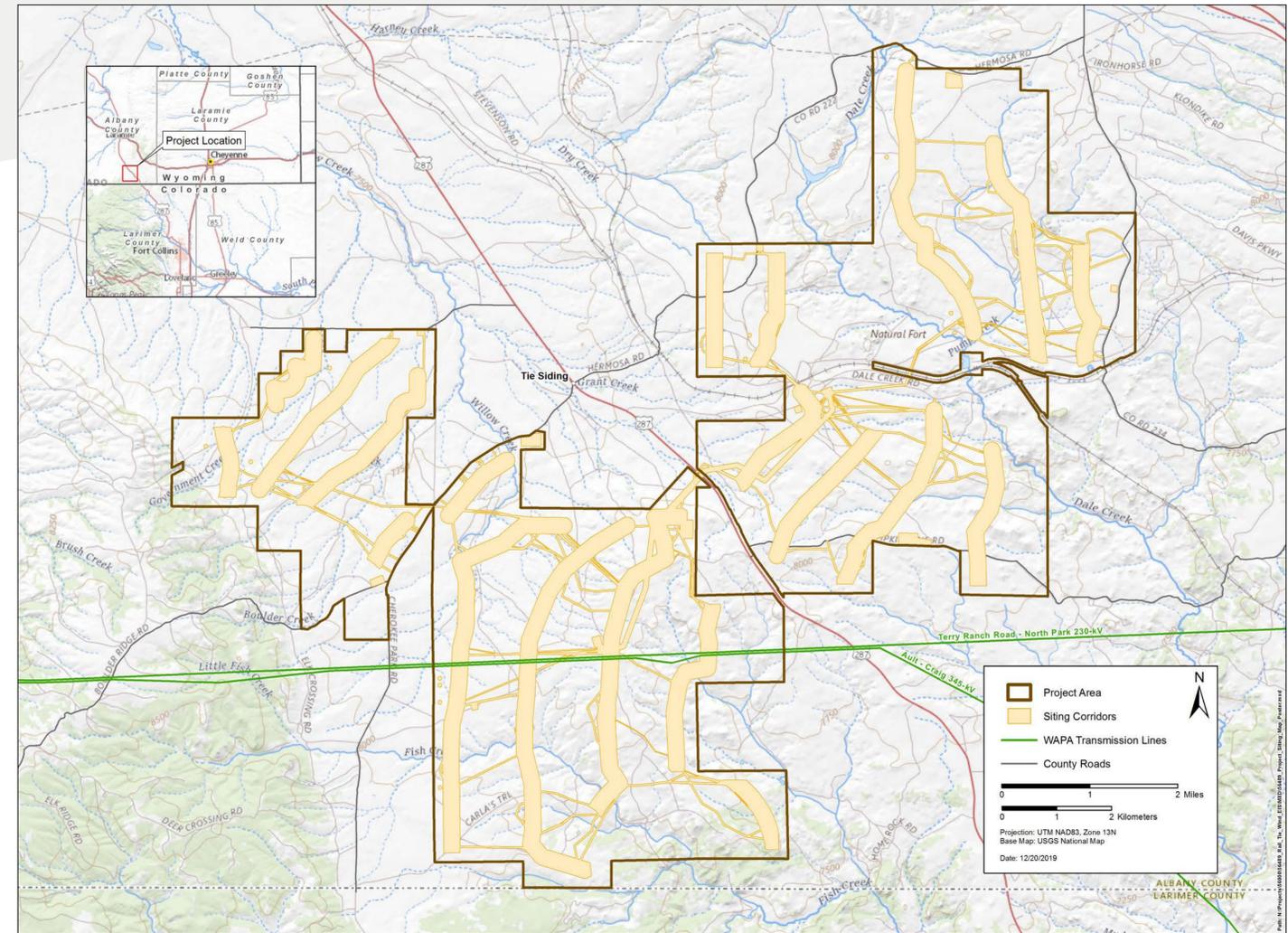
PROJECT SITING

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

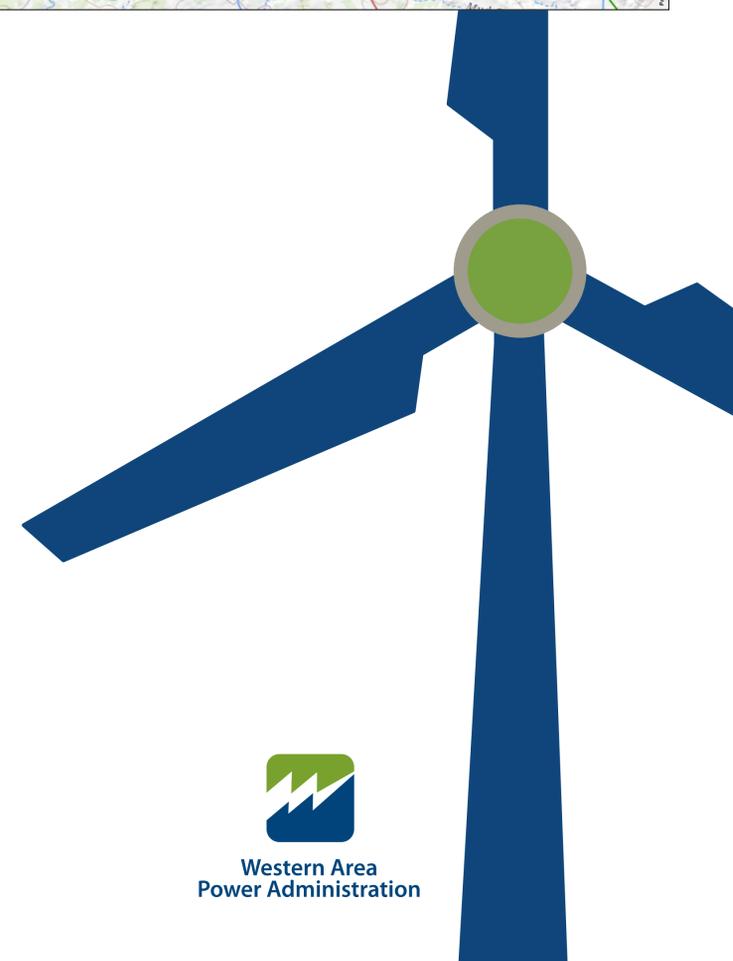
ConnectGen considered numerous factors to determine the most suitable location for the Rail Tie Wind Project. The factors listed below were the most important to selection of the Rail Tie Wind Project site.

- Access to high-quality wind resource (10 meters-per-second at turbine hub height)
- Proximity to existing high-voltage transmission capacity
- Minimization of impacts to sensitive wildlife and habitats
- Avoidance of protected lands
- Interest from local landowners and compatible land use
- Access to highways for materials delivery
- Constructability of terrain



ALBANY COUNTY WIND ENERGY SITING REGULATIONS

FEATURE	SETBACK DISTANCE
Incorporated municipality	1 mile
Platted subdivision	5.5 times total turbine height
Residential dwelling or occupied structure	5.5 times total turbine height
Highway right-of-way	0.25 mile
State parks and wildlife refuges	0.25 mile
Third-party transmission lines and communication towers	1.1 times total turbine height
Adjacent property lines of non-participating landowners	1.1 times total turbine height
Public roads and railroads	1.1 times total turbine height



WIND ENERGY ENGINEERING

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

WIND TURBINES

The major component of a wind project is the wind turbines. As turbine technology continues to improve, the industry is trending toward larger turbines with higher nameplate capacities. This means each individual turbine can generate more energy, so fewer turbines overall are needed for a wind project.

ConnectGen is considering a range of turbine models with nameplate capacities between 3 MW and 6 MW. Depending on which turbine model is selected, the total 504-MW Project will be composed of 84 to 151 individual turbines. ConnectGen will select the turbine model based on final engineering and design, turbine availability from manufacturers, and ongoing wind resources studies.

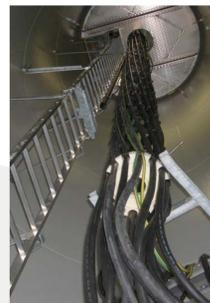
To comply with Federal Aviation Administration and Albany County, Wyoming, regulations, turbines would require aircraft warning lights and would be nonreflective white or gray in color.

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the proposed Project would occur over approximately 18 months, depending on the final size of the Project.

The expected sequence of construction activities is listed below (activities 3-7 would occur simultaneously).

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 - Mobilization | 5 - Transmission line construction |
| 2 - Access roads and laydown areas | 6 - Foundations |
| 3 - Substation construction | 7 - Turbine installation |
| 4 - Operations and maintenance building construction | 8 - Commissioning and acceptance testing |



THE NEPA PROCESS

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

WHAT IS NEPA?

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969 and associated regulations requires federal agencies to consider the potential effects of major federal actions on the human and natural environments.

To comply with NEPA, WAPA prepares environmental impact statements (EIS) to analyze and disclose the impacts of major federal actions.

WAPA'S ROLE

WAPA is responding to ConnectGen's request for interconnection with WAPA's high-voltage transmission grid. The interconnection and the associated action of constructing and operating the proposed wind farm raises the proposed Project to a major federal action under NEPA.

If WAPA's decision is to approve the interconnection request, an interconnection and interconnection switchyard would be constructed. WAPA would then own, operate, and maintain the 345-kV interconnection and interconnection switchyard located adjacent to the Ault-Craig transmission line.

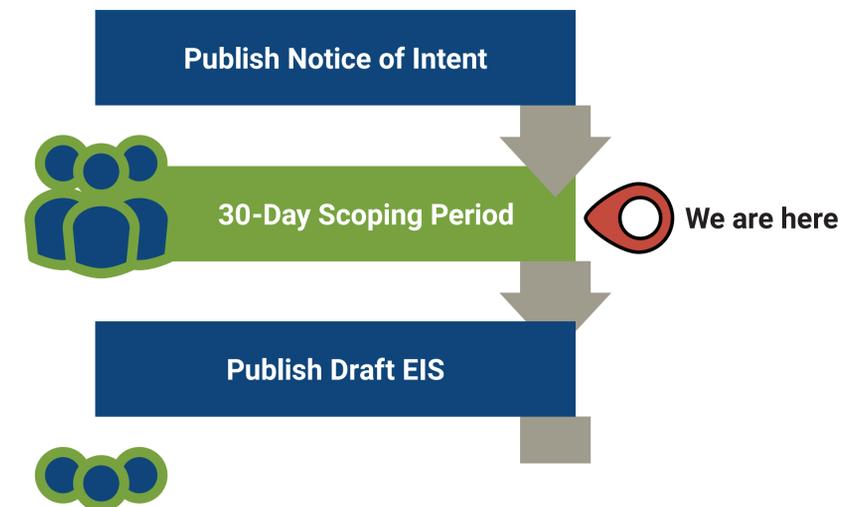
SWCA Environmental Consultants is providing support to WAPA in the preparation of the EIS for the proposed Project. SWCA is also managing public involvement and public comments for the EIS process. Publication of the Draft EIS is anticipated for the fourth quarter of 2020.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There are several opportunities in the NEPA process designated specifically for individuals, agencies, tribes, and organizations to provide comments. WAPA will accept input from any of these entities at any time during the NEPA process.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

 = Public Involvement Opportunities



POTENTIALLY AFFECTED RESOURCES

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

The EIS will consider potentially affected resources in the Project area, including those listed below.

- Agriculture
- Air Quality and Climate Change
- Biological Resources, including Endangered Species Act Section 7 compliance
- Cultural Resources, including National Historic Preservation Act Section 106 compliance
- Environmental Justice
- Geological Soils
- Hazardous Material
- Health and Safety
- Land Use and Recreation
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Paleontological Resources
- Recreation
- Socioeconomics
- Transportation
- Visual Resources



VISUAL SIMULATIONS

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

TIE SIDING KEY OBSERVATION POINT

Baseline Condition



Conceptual Design with 3 MW Turbines



Conceptual Design with 6 MW Turbines



VISUAL SIMULATIONS

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

THE BUTTES KEY OBSERVATION POINT



Baseline Condition

Conceptual Design with 6 MW Turbines, Daytime View



Conceptual Design with 6 MW Turbines, Nighttime View



VISUAL SIMULATIONS

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

I-80 KEY OBSERVATION POINT

Baseline Condition

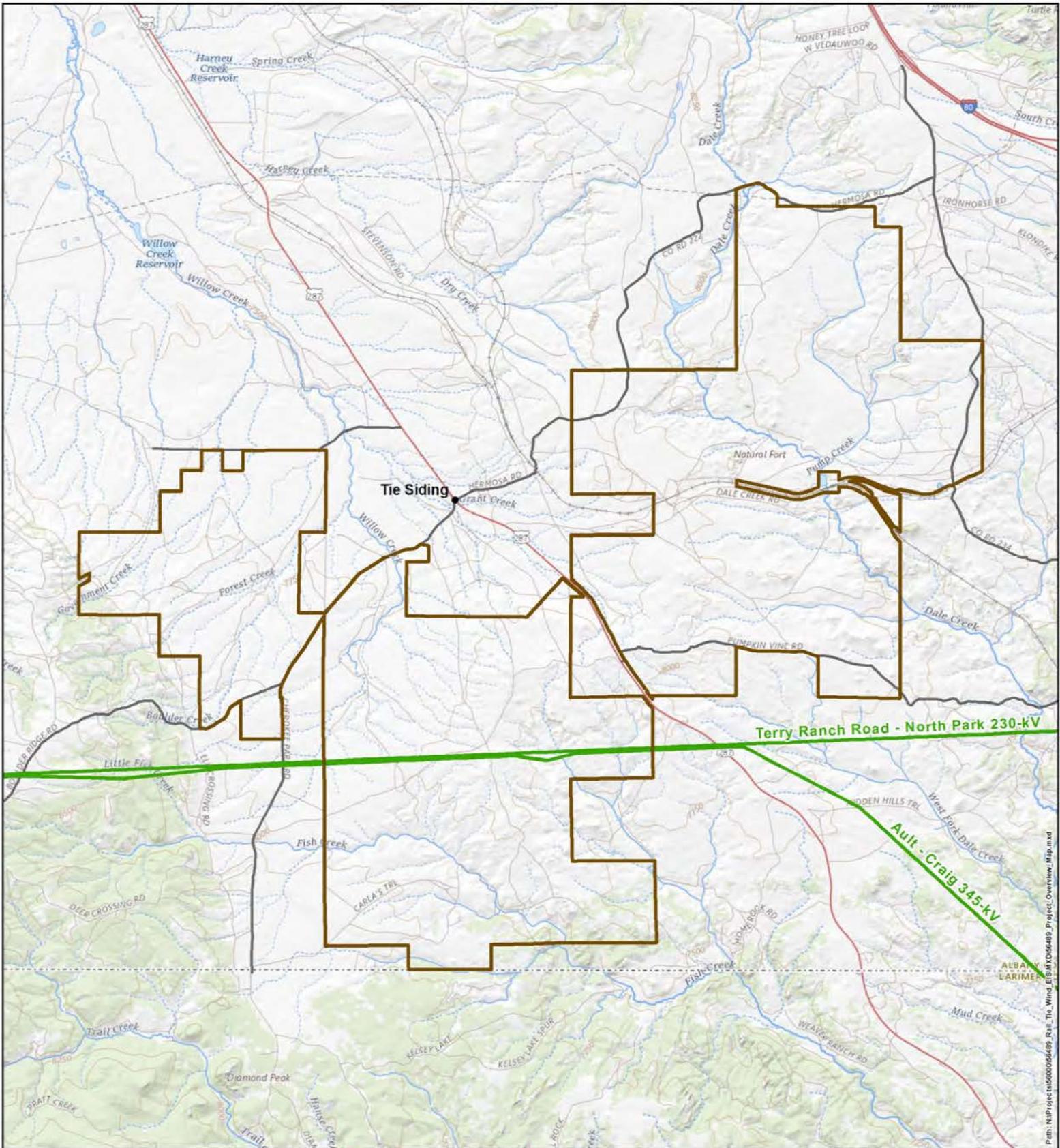


Conceptual Design with 3 MW Turbines



Conceptual Design with 6 MW Turbines





Path: N:\Project\1560005489_Rail_Tie_Wind_EIS\MD\5489_Project_Overview_Map.mxd

- Project Area
- WAPA Transmission Lines
- County Roads



0 1 2 Miles

0 1 2 Kilometers

Scale: 2,500,000
 Projection: UTM NAD83, Zone 13N
 Base Map: USGS National Map
 Date: 12/20/2019

Western Area
Power Administration

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT

NEPA PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

Hilton Garden Inn, Laramie, Wyoming | January 14, 2020



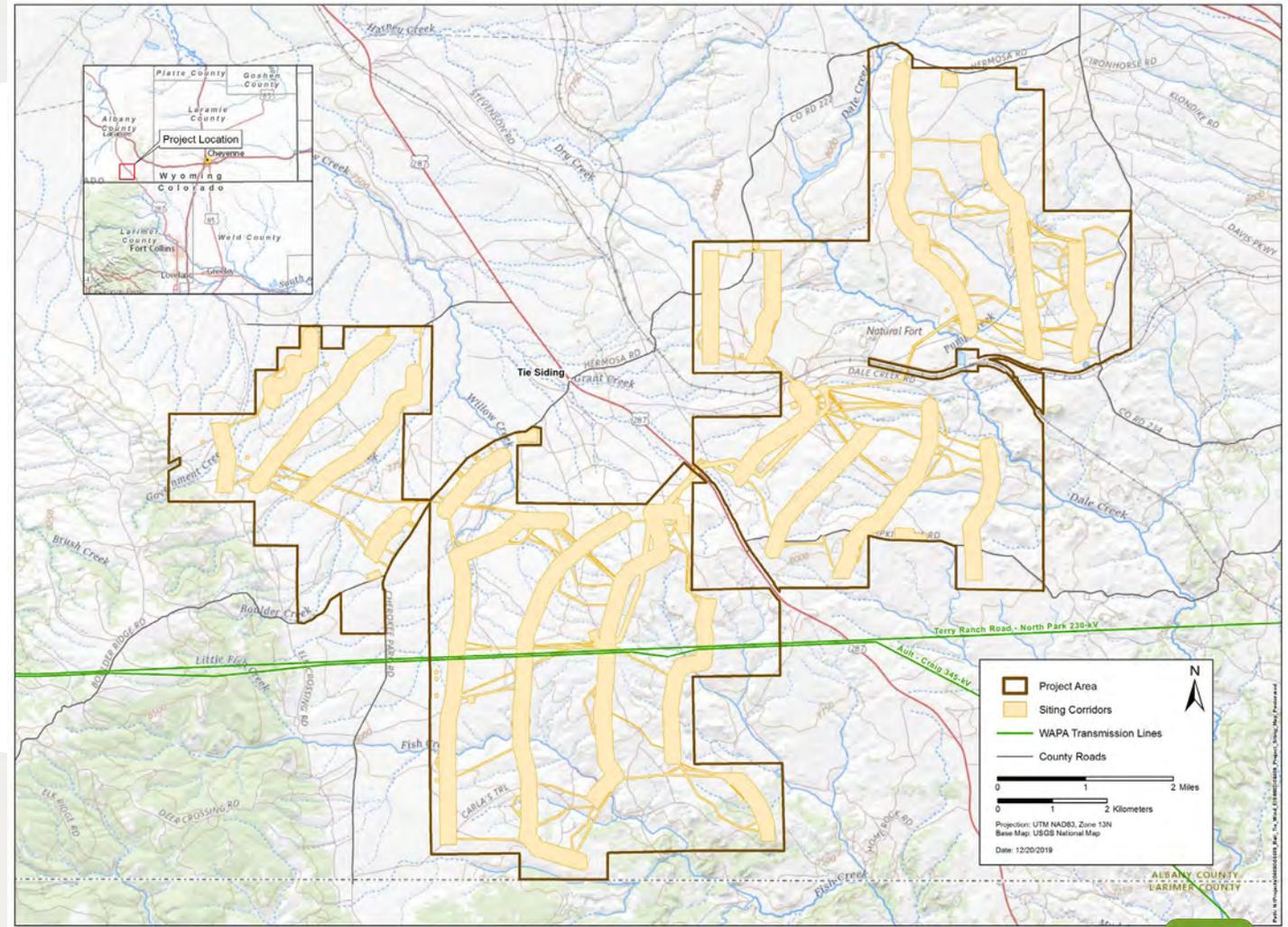
Western Area
Power Administration



PROJECT OVERVIEW

Rail Tie Wind Project

- **Location:** Albany County, Wyoming
- **Nameplate capacity:** 504 megawatts
- **Project area:** 26,000 acres of private and state land
- **Interconnection:** Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line jointly owned by WAPA, Tri-State, and Platte River Power Authority



PROJECT PROPONENT BACKGROUND

Rail Tie Wind Project

CONNECTGEN ALBANY COUNTY LLC



- Independent renewable energy company focused on the development of greenfield wind, solar, and energy storage projects across the United States
- Headquartered in Houston, Texas, and backed by Quantum Energy Partners

RAIL TIE WIND PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

- To respond to increasing market demand for sources of renewable energy
- Demand is primarily driven by the rapidly falling costs of wind- and solar-generated electricity and state clean energy mandates

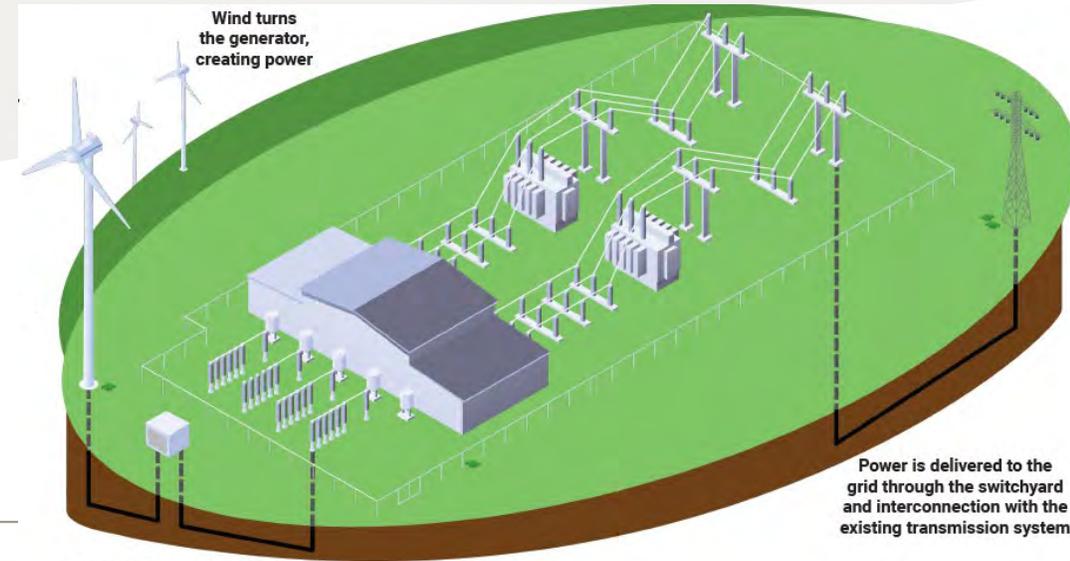
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Rail Tie Wind Project

PROJECT ATTRIBUTES

TOTAL OUTPUT CAPACITY	504 MW
PROJECT AREA	26,000 ACRES

Turbine Generators	Output	3 MW–6 MW
	Count	84–151
	Overall Height	up to 675 feet
	Nacelle Height	up to 410 feet
	Blade Length	up to 272 feet
Collection Lines	34.5 kV	80 miles, primarily underground; if overhead, 50- to 80-foot-tall structures
Substations	2 substations – 345 kV each	5 acres each
Transmission Lines	345 kV	4 miles, up to 125 feet tall
Interconnection Switchyard	1 site – 345 kV	8 acres
Operations & Maintenance Facility	7,000-square-foot building	5 acres
Access Roads	All-weather; new, improved, and existing	60 miles, 20-foot-wide travel surface
Meteorological Towers	3 – self-supported lattice-mast	105 meter tall
Construction Laydown Yards	2 – temporary	15 acres each



The power is collected and the voltage is adjusted through transformers in substations

Power is delivered to the grid through the switchyard and interconnection with the existing transmission system

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Rail Tie Wind Project

Project Development Activities to Date:

- Wind lease agreements
- Baseline wildlife surveys
- Wind data collection
- WAPA interconnection studies
- Agency coordination; stakeholder outreach
- Prelim. engineering and layout design

Future Development Activities outside NEPA:

- State (Industrial Siting Council) and Albany County permitting
- Secure commercial contract (Power Purchase Agreement)
- Final engineering; equipment procurement

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION

Rail Tie Wind Project

- Occurs over approximately 18 months
- Expected sequence (activities 3-7 occur simultaneously)

1. Mobilization
2. Access roads and laydown areas
3. Substation construction
4. O & M building construction
5. Transmission line construction
6. Foundations
7. Turbine installation
8. Commissioning and acceptance testing



PROJECT PROPONENT VS. LEAD AGENCY

Rail Tie Wind Project



- ConnectGen's role:
Project Proponent-Developer
- Requested interconnection to
WAPA transmission system
- Permitting support from
Tetra Tech, Inc.



Western Area Power Administration

- WAPA's role: Lead National
Environmental Policy Act
(NEPA) Agency
- Responding to
interconnection request
- NEPA support from SWCA
Environmental Consultants

THE NEPA PROCESS

Rail Tie Wind Project

- ConnectGen's request for interconnection to WAPA's existing Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line
- WAPA's response and decision
 - Major federal action under NEPA of 1969
 - Environmental Impact Statement

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT PROCESS

 = Public Involvement Opportunities



PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rail Tie Wind Project

WHERE

- **HERE**
- **Via email**
- **Via mail**

WHEN

- **Scoping Period/ Meeting (NOW)**
- **Draft EIS Public Review & Comment Period/
Hearing**

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NEPA Document Manager

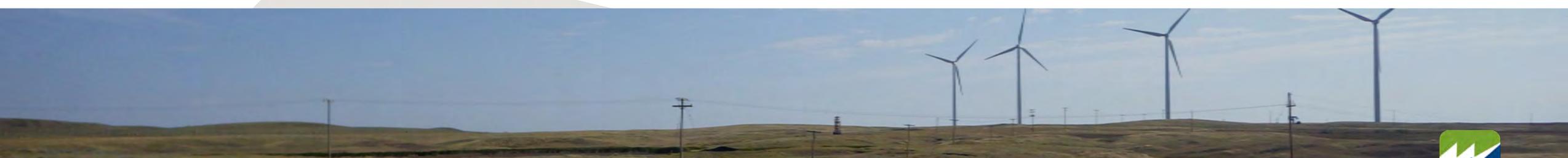
Rail Tie Wind Project

Western Area Power Administration

Headquarters Office, A9402

P.O. Box 281213

Lakewood, CO 80228-8213



PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rail Tie Wind Project

EFFECTIVE COMMENTS

- Are specific to proposed Project
- Relate to scope of analysis, severity of potential impacts, or present potential alternatives
- Provide local knowledge to influence Project design or to be considered in impact analysis

The image shows a 'PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT FORM' for the 'Rail Tie Wind Project' from the 'Western Area Power Administration'. The form includes a logo, a thank you message, and a section for providing comments. A second form is partially visible behind it, showing contact information for J. Wieringa at the Western Area Power Administration Writers Office, A9402, 281213, CO 80228-8213. The email address 'd@wapa.gov' is also visible.

PUBLIC SCOPING COMMENT FORM

Western Area Power Administration

Rail Tie Wind Project

Thank you for taking the time to participate in the public scoping process. Please submit your comments at the public scoping meeting or by email or mail.

Please provide any comments on the proposed Project in the space below:

Comments by
d@wapa.gov

Zip:

