

Rail Tie Wind Project Virtual Public Hearing April 29, 2021

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00:00:49.740 --> 00:01:03.300

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Welcome to the Rail Tie Wind Project virtual public hearing for April 29, 2021. I'm Sarah Lupis, project coordinator for the Rail Tie Wind Project at SWCA Environmental Consultants and the facilitator for today's hearing.

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00:01:04.260 --> 00:01:08.460

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We will allow a few minutes for attendees to join the webinar and then we will begin.

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00:01:09.840 --> 00:01:17.520

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please note that this meeting is being recorded. Please also note that, because this is a Zoom webinar, the chat function is disabled.

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00:01:17.970 --> 00:01:28.560

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If you're having any technical issues, please use the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen to request assistance. For those on the phone, please dial star-nine to indicate that you need technology support.

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00:06:06.330 --> 00:06:21.270

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): For those of you who have just joined, welcome to the Rail Tie Wind Project virtual public hearing for April 29, 2021. I'm Sarah Lupis, project coordinator for the Rail Tie Wind Project at SWCA Environmental Consultants and the facilitator for today's hearing.

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00:06:22.320 --> 00:06:29.190

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We will allow just a few more minutes for attendees to join the webinar and then we will begin. Please note that this meeting is being recorded.

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00:06:29.880 --> 00:06:34.260

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please also note that because this is a Zoom webinar, the chat function has been disabled.

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00:06:35.250 --> 00:06:46.980

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If you're having any technical issues, please use the Q&A button at the bottom of your screen to request assistance. For those on the phone, please dial star-nine to indicate that you need technology support.

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00:09:59.340 --> 00:10:03.510

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): It looks like we have most participants in attendance, so we will now begin the program.

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00:10:04.410 --> 00:10:17.370

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Once again, welcome to the Rail Tie Wind Project virtual public hearing for April 29, 2021. I'm Sarah Lupis, project coordinator for the Rail Tie Wind Project at SWCA Environmental Consultants and the facilitator for today's hearing.

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00:10:18.420 --> 00:10:26.190

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): I'd like to start by giving you an overview of the agenda. We're going to start by reviewing the virtual meeting technology, and then we'll introduce the panel,

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00:10:26.700 --> 00:10:35.610

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): watch a 20-minute video to give you some background on the Project, the NEPA process, and the public comment period, and then we will start the public hearing portion of the meeting.

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00:10:37.320 --> 00:10:43.650

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): I also wanted to give you an idea of what to expect for the public hearing portion of this meeting, because that is really the purpose of this event.

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00:10:44.430 --> 00:10:50.130

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): To ensure that everyone who wants to has the opportunity to speak during the public hearing portion of the meeting,

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00:10:50.850 --> 00:11:03.450

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): you will have the opportunity to speak for 3 minutes at a time. The queue will stay open until 7:30 Mountain Time, or approximately for 90 minutes. At the end of that time, we will not take any more signups to speak.

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00:11:04.980 --> 00:11:09.420

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The meeting will continue until all commenters in the queue have had the opportunity to be heard.

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00:11:10.140 --> 00:11:20.010

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We welcome you to comment more than once. You will have 3 minutes to deliver your comment during your turn, and then you may enter the queue to speak again until the queue is closed at around 7:30.

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00:11:21.030 --> 00:11:24.120

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): I'll get into more details about how to join the queue in a few minutes.

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00:11:25.620 --> 00:11:29.670

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We will now review the Zoom webinar technology we will be using during this meeting.

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00:11:30.900 --> 00:11:41.820

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): To adjust to your view, you can click on View Options at the top. To show video at the top or side-by-side, you can also toggle between the Speaker and Gallery View in the upper right.

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00:11:43.050 --> 00:11:52.650

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We recommend a Side-by-Side and Speaker View when the screen is being shared. If a screen is not being shared, Side-by-Side and Gallery View is recommended.

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00:11:55.110 --> 00:12:01.290

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): At the end of the video presentation, you will be invited to use the Raise Hand function to join the queue to give verbal comments.

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00:12:01.860 --> 00:12:12.870

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If you are joining on a computer, the Raise Hand button is at the bottom of your screen. If you're joining from your mobile phone, the button is also at the bottom of your screen and you may need to tap the screen to see this menu.

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00:12:14.730 --> 00:12:19.320

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If anyone is joining by telephone, you will dial star-nine to be added to the speaking queue.

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00:12:21.030 --> 00:12:37.350

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): After the video, you will also be invited to use the Q&A button to type out questions you wish to ask the panel. Questions will be held until all speakers and finished giving

comments. At that time, questions and the panel's responses will be displayed on the screen and read out loud.

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00:12:38.370 --> 00:12:47.370

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel will respond to as many questions as possible during the hearings. All questions and panel responses will be posted on the Project website, following the hearing.

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00:12:48.540 --> 00:13:01.260

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The Q&A button should only be used for questions. It is not an official channel for submitting comments. Written comments may be submitted via email, the online form, or the mail, as the video will describe.

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00:13:02.370 --> 00:13:06.870

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Following the hearing, questions and responses will be posted on the Project website.

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00:13:11.070 --> 00:13:17.430

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): At this time, the members of our panel, who will be working behind the scenes during tonight's hearing, will introduce themselves.

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00:13:26.340 --> 00:13:35.310

Mark Wieringa (WAPA): Hello, this is Mark Wieringa, Western Area Power Administration. I'm the project manager for the Rail Tie Project,

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00:13:36.390 --> 00:13:38.700

Mark Wieringa (WAPA): located in Lakewood, Colorado.

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00:13:44.010 --> 00:13:47.340

Lisa Meyer (WAPA): Hello, I'm Lisa Meyer, Headquarters archaeologist for

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00:13:47.340 --> 00:13:47.730

Lisa Meyer (WAPA): WAPA.

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00:13:53.250 --> 00:13:56.970

Tim Langer (WAPA): Good afternoon. My name is Tim Langer, Headquarters biologist for WAPA.

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00:14:00.150 --> 00:14:03.600

Eric Barendsen (WAPA): And I'm Eric Barendsen, public affairs specialist with WAPA.

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00:14:06.240 --> 00:14:14.940

David Fetter (SWCA): Hello, I'm David Fetter, senior project manager with SWCA Environmental Consultants. We are assisting WAPA with the preparation of the EIS.

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00:14:16.860 --> 00:14:20.280

Krista Perry (SWCA): I'm Krista Perry, the assistant project manager with SWCA.

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00:14:23.820 --> 00:14:28.230

Jennifer Wynn (SWCA): Hi, I'm Jen Wynn, and I'm with SWCA, and I'm running the Zoom for this meeting.

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00:14:32.130 --> 00:14:38.250

John Kuba (ConnectGen): I am John Kuba, director of environmental affairs for ConnectGen, the company developing the Rail Tie Wind Project.

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00:14:41.220 --> 00:14:43.410

Amanda MacDonald (ConnectGen): Hi, everyone, I'm Amanda MacDonald and I'm the

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00:14:43.410 --> 00:14:46.410

Amanda MacDonald (ConnectGen): project manager for the Rail Tie Wind Project with ConnectGen.

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00:14:49.830 --> 00:14:50.670

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, panel.

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00:14:51.960 --> 00:15:00.450

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Next, we have prepared a short video for you that summarizes the draft environmental impact statement, the National Environmental Policy Act process for the Project,

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00:15:00.840 --> 00:15:11.160

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): and the public comment period that we are currently in, including how to submit your comments. After the video, we will review how you can offer your comments today and start the public hearing.

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00:15:19.590 --> 00:15:24.180

[Video begins] Hello, this is Mark Wieringa, Western Area Power Administration's NEPA document manager for the proposed Rail Tie Wind Project.

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00:15:25.080 --> 00:15:38.970

Western Area Power Administration, or WAPA, released a draft environmental impact statement, or EIS, for the interconnection of ConnectGen Albany County's proposed Rail Tie Wind Project on April 2, 2021.

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00:15:39.750 --> 00:15:49.140

To ensure the public has an opportunity to provide input, we will be accepting public comments until Monday, May 17, 2021, including in writing

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00:15:49.740 --> 00:15:58.800

(online and email are preferred), or verbally during public hearings. Time for speaking during the hearings is limited, and written comments are encouraged.

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00:15:59.370 --> 00:16:17.250

All comments will be considered as the draft EIS is revised and will be preserved in the administrative record. This presentation will provide information on the proposed Project, the draft environmental impact statement, and how you can participate in the 45-day public comment period.

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00:16:20.850 --> 00:16:27.720

WAPA is evaluating an interconnection request submitted by ConnectGen to connect the Rail Tie Wind Project to WAPA's

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00:16:29.250 --> 00:16:34.620

existing Ault-Craig 345-kilovolt transmission line in Albany County, Wyoming.

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00:16:35.640 --> 00:16:52.080

ConnectGen's goals and objectives for developing the Rail Tie Wind Project include responding to increasing market demand for sources of renewable energy. Demand is primarily driven by the falling costs of wind- and solar-generated electricity and state clean energy mandates.

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00:16:53.100 --> 00:17:11.460

The 26,000-acre Project Area, shown here outlined in red, is approximately 20 miles south of Laramie, Wyoming, near Tie Siding, and just north of the Colorado-Wyoming state line. The Project Area is bisected by U.S. Highway 287 and two existing transmission lines.

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00:17:12.540 --> 00:17:29.100

Within the Project Area, areas shaded white and blue represent private and state land. Outside the Project Area, areas shaded green, yellow, and orange represent Federal land, including U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management land, and county land.

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00:17:30.360 --> 00:17:47.160

The portion of the Project Area west of U.S. Highway 287 was considered for a wind generation Project by Shell WindEnergy between 2010 and 2014. That proposed Project was suspended when Shell Corporate decided to exit the wind energy sector entirely.

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00:17:48.810 --> 00:17:59.970

The proposed Project would be owned and operated by ConnectGen and would include between 84 and 149 wind turbines with a generating capacity of up to 504 megawatts.

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00:18:00.750 --> 00:18:11.850

In addition to the turbines, the proposed Project would include access roads, collection lines, substations, control buildings, meteorological towers, and other related infrastructure.

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00:18:13.710 --> 00:18:26.160

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 megawatts and 6 megawatts each.

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00:18:27.060 --> 00:18:34.590

Regardless of the turbine model selected, turbines would be sited within 1,000-foot siting corridors, shown here in green.

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00:18:35.520 --> 00:18:48.720

Other Project components, such as access roads, collection lines, substations, control buildings, a meteorological tower, and other related infrastructure would be located in the non-turbine siting corridors shown here in blue.

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00:18:50.070 --> 00:19:02.910

If WAPA decides to approve the interconnection request after the environmental process is complete, WAPA would construct, own, operate, and maintain a switchyard to control power flow into WAPA's existing transmission

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00:19:03.750 --> 00:19:14.370

line that crosses the southern portion of the Project Area. If WAPA decides to deny the interconnection request, the Project would not be allowed to connect to the existing WAPA transmission system.

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00:19:15.600 --> 00:19:28.200

While this would not preclude the Project from being constructed and connected to a non-WAPA-managed transmission system, for the purposes of analysis, the draft EIS assumes that in that case, the Project would not be built.

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00:19:29.490 --> 00:19:35.580

WAPA's decision is framed by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission open access to transmission orders.

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00:19:36.270 --> 00:19:49.440

These orders generally require utilities to make unused transmission capacity available as long as an interconnection does not cause system problems, and the requestor funds any necessary system upgrades.

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00:19:51.420 --> 00:20:04.020

ConnectGen is the proponent of the Rail Tie Wind Project. ConnectGen is an independent renewable energy company focused on the development of greenfield wind, solar, and energy storage Projects across the United States.

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00:20:04.710 --> 00:20:17.190

They are headquartered in Houston, Texas, and backed by Quantum Energy Partners. ConnectGen has requested to interconnect the Rail Tie Wind Project to WAPA's existing Ault-Craig 345-kV transmission line.

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00:20:18.360 --> 00:20:34.230

ConnectGen's environmental contractor, Tetra Tech, Inc., has provided permitting support and conducted numerous technical studies regarding the resources that were evaluated in the draft EIS. These technical reports are available on WAPA's website for this Project.

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00:20:35.520 --> 00:20:49.800

WAPA determined that granting the request for an interconnection to its transmission system, together with ConnectGen's proposed Project considered as a connected action, would constitute a major Federal action requiring the preparation of an EIS.

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00:20:50.970 --> 00:21:10.380

Under the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, also called NEPA, WAPA is the lead agency and, as such, WAPA is responsible for preparing the EIS. WAPA is working with SWCA Environmental Consultants, the third-party environmental contractor supporting WAPA in the NEPA process.

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00:21:11.490 --> 00:21:20.520

SWCA's role is to prepare the EIS under WAPA's guidance, verify the data and information used, and identify any data gaps.

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00:21:22.260 --> 00:21:30.360

Hello this is David Fetter, project manager at SWCA Environmental Consultants. SWCA is supporting WAPA in the NEPA process.

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00:21:30.870 --> 00:21:41.550

I'm going to summarize the impact analysis presented in the draft EIS. The draft EIS analyzed the potential for significant impact on 15 different resource categories.

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00:21:42.030 --> 00:21:49.050

These resources were chosen based on the comments WAPA received from the public and cooperating agencies during the scoping process.

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00:21:49.920 --> 00:22:03.480

An issues-based analysis was used to evaluate impact. As you review the draft EIS, you will notice that for each resource, issue questions are asked and responses to each one are provided. The issue statements or questions were based on scoping input.

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00:22:05.370 --> 00:22:10.470

The draft EIS concluded that there would be significant impacts for aesthetics and visual resources.

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00:22:11.130 --> 00:22:25.770

The other resources analyzed in the draft EIS could be impacted to varying degrees but would not experience significant impacts. For more information on the findings of no significance for the remaining 14 resources, please refer to Chapter 3 of the draft EIS.

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00:22:28.440 --> 00:22:43.530

Impacts to visual resources were analyzed in a viewshed that extended 30 miles beyond the Project Area, as illustrated by the green circle in this map. The purple shading on this map represents where the Project's wind turbines would be visible within that analysis area.

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00:22:44.610 --> 00:22:54.630

The impact analysis for visual resources also relied on professional visual simulations prepared from a selection of different key observation points—or KOPs—

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00:22:55.080 --> 00:23:04.470

that represent viewing locations where the Project would be visible from both from stationary platforms like residential areas, tourist sites, or recreation sites,

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00:23:04.920 --> 00:23:16.380

as well as linear platforms, like highways or major roadways. This map shows the key observation points that were identified to represent the most critical viewpoints in the analysis area.

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00:23:20.370 --> 00:23:28.230

Impacts to visual resources were evaluated based on degrees of visual change, which are specific criteria for assessing changes to a viewshed.

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00:23:28.890 --> 00:23:38.400

In assessing degrees of visual change, current conditions were compared to the conditions expected under the proposed Project with both the minimum and maximum turbine heights.

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00:23:39.000 --> 00:23:47.850

Under the minimum turbine height scenario, there would be more, shorter turbines. Under the maximum turbine height scenario, there would be fewer, taller turbines.

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00:23:48.660 --> 00:23:57.270

Degrees of visual change in the analysis area ranges from none to strong and consider distance from the Project and intervening topography.

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00:23:58.320 --> 00:24:08.040

The degree of visual change for travelers, tourists, and residents ranged from none to strong, depending on distance from the Project and the key observation point.

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00:24:08.970 --> 00:24:24.600

Overall, the degrees of visual change for minimum turbine height would be moderate to strong from 54 percent of key observation points compared to 76 percent of key observation points associated with the maximum turbine height.

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00:24:28.290 --> 00:24:37.290

For example, this picture simulates what the view of the Project would look like from the Ames Monument key observation point in the middle of the day,

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00:24:37.800 --> 00:24:48.900

if you were facing southwest looking out from the western edge of the monument structure toward the Project Area, using the maximum turbine height scenario.

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00:24:54.840 --> 00:25:04.380

The draft EIS concludes that the impacts to visual resources would be significant. Specifically, that means that the landscape would appear substantially to severely altered.

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00:25:05.070 --> 00:25:20.460

Project components would introduce form, line, color, texture, or scale uncommon in the landscape and would be visually prominent to dominant in the landscape; the turbines would attract and demand attention; and would dominate the visual setting in many cases.

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00:25:23.370 --> 00:25:30.090

The draft EIS also analyzed impacts to wildlife species that are known or have the potential to occur in the Project Area.

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00:25:30.810 --> 00:25:35.970

Impacts to habitat, individual animals, and wildlife populations were considered.

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00:25:36.690 --> 00:25:46.200

The draft EIS concluded that while the proposed Project would affect habitats and individual plants and animals, populations would not be significantly impacted.

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00:25:46.860 --> 00:25:55.590

Those impacts would be temporary—generally ending with the construction effort and finally with decommissioning and site reclamation at the end of the Project’s life.

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00:25:57.750 --> 00:26:02.790

The draft EIS also analyzed impacts to cultural resources and Native American concerns.

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00:26:03.750 --> 00:26:13.500

Compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act is triggered when a Federal agency determines that its action has the potential to affect historic property listed

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00:26:13.800 --> 00:26:17.790

or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

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00:26:18.510 --> 00:26:31.020

WAPA is working with the Wyoming State Historic Preservation Office and other interested parties to develop a programmatic agreement that takes into account the effects that the proposed Project would have on historic properties

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00:26:31.410 --> 00:26:35.850

and includes a detailed process for establishing measures that would mitigate those effects.

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00:26:36.780 --> 00:26:40.650

Where it is determined that the Project would impact cultural properties or resources,

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00:26:41.040 --> 00:26:53.460

a historic properties treatment plan would be developed to resolve the adverse effect of the undertaking, consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation.

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00:26:55.530 --> 00:27:03.000

Next, I am going to summarize the National Environmental Policy Act—or NEPA—process for the Project and options for public participation.

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00:27:03.810 --> 00:27:08.490

ConnectGen’s interconnection request triggered the need for NEPA review because the interconnection,

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00:27:08.910 --> 00:27:17.130

together with ConnectGen's wind farm considered as a connected action, would constitute a major Federal action requiring the preparation of an EIS.

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00:27:18.060 --> 00:27:26.160

We are currently in the 45-day review of the draft EIS. The draft EIS review period will end on Monday, May 17, 2021.

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00:27:27.000 --> 00:27:37.350

At the end of this review period, WAPA will revise the draft EIS based on feedback from the public, cooperating agencies, and consulting tribes and publish a final EIS.

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00:27:38.280 --> 00:27:46.770

The final EIS will be available for review for a minimum of 30 days, after which WAPA will publish a record of decision for the proposed Project.

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00:27:47.460 --> 00:27:52.260

If WAPA decides to approve the interconnection request after the NEPA process is complete,

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00:27:52.710 --> 00:28:00.570

WAPA would construct, own, operate, and maintain a switchyard within the Project Area to control power flow onto their existing transmission line.

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00:28:01.440 --> 00:28:08.550

If WAPA decides to deny the interconnection request, the Project would not be allowed to connect to the existing WAPA transmission system.

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00:28:09.450 --> 00:28:22.320

While this would not preclude the Project from being constructed and connected to a non-WAPA-managed transmission system, for the purposes of this analysis, this EIS assumes that in that case, the Project would not be built.

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00:28:23.430 --> 00:28:31.350

This is a list of the cooperating agencies currently involved in the NEPA process. Cooperating agencies include those Federal, State, and local agencies that have jurisdiction by law and/or special expertise.

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00:28:32.100 --> 00:28:36.780

The role of cooperating agencies may include participating in the scoping process,

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00:28:37.170 --> 00:28:51.750

The role of cooperating agencies may include participating in the scoping process,

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00:28:54.450 --> 00:29:03.660

WAPA is also conducting formal consultation with interested tribes on a government-to-government level, according to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

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00:29:04.440 --> 00:29:15.150

WAPA has invited 16 federally recognized tribes to participate in the Section 106 consultation process; to-date, six tribes have accepted WAPA's invitation.

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00:29:15.870 --> 00:29:26.670

There are multiple ways to submit comments on the draft EIS. Written comments are preferred, and you are encouraged to send your comments via email or use the online form provided on the Project website.

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00:29:27.480 --> 00:29:40.560

While we can receive comments through the mail, please note that access to WAPA's Headquarters Office is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so written comments mailed to the WAPA Headquarters Office may be delayed in reaching the Project Team.

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00:29:43.470 --> 00:29:52.380

The email address, web address for the online form, and mailing address are displayed on the screen. This information is also available on the Project website.

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00:29:53.040 --> 00:29:58.170

Written comments submitted electronically via the online form or email are preferred.

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00:29:58.800 --> 00:30:11.100

WAPA will accept public input at any time during the NEPA process; however, for your comments to be fully considered when the draft EIS is revised, they must be submitted by Monday, May 17, 2021.

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00:30:11.970 --> 00:30:22.200

The best comments provide the team with information to use or to act upon when revising the EIS. Effective comments are specific to the Rail Tie Wind Project.

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00:30:22.950 --> 00:30:30.240

They relate to analysis, especially the thoroughness and technical accuracy of the impact analyses presented in the draft EIS.

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00:30:30.930 --> 00:30:41.370

They include suggested changes, additional sources, or alternate analysis methodologies, and when possible, they reference a section or page number of the draft EIS.

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00:30:43.050 --> 00:30:52.740

To merit a written response, comments must be submitted in writing via either paper or electronic format or provided verbally during the hearing portions of the draft EIS meetings.

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00:30:53.280 --> 00:31:00.600

They must be substantive and received by Monday, May 17th. Substantive comments do one or more of the following:

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00:31:01.230 --> 00:31:09.570

Question the accuracy of information in the draft EIS, including the basis for the question along with any accurate and defensible replacement information;

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00:31:10.320 --> 00:31:21.090

question the adequacy of, methodology for, or assumptions used for the environmental analysis, including the basis for the question and any actions that would solve the commenter's issue;

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00:31:21.930 --> 00:31:33.120

present new information relevant to the analysis or present reasonable alternatives other than those analyzed in the draft EIS that also meet the lead agency's purpose and need.

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00:31:36.300 --> 00:31:43.770

Comments that are not substantive generally contain only opinion or preferences. These will be included as part of the Project record.

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00:31:44.430 --> 00:31:56.880

They will not, however, receive a formal response from WAPA. Comments that are not considered substantive include the following: Comments in favor of or against the proposed Project with no additional substantive content;

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00:31:57.690 --> 00:32:05.040

comments that only agree or disagree with WAPA policy or resource decisions and that do not include justification or supporting data;

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00:32:05.820 --> 00:32:23.550

comments that do not pertain to the 26,000-acre Project Area or the Project itself; comments that take the form of vague, open-ended questions. That concludes our presentation. We appreciate your interest and participation in the Rail Tie Wind Project and the ongoing NEPA process. [Video ends]

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00:32:30.600 --> 00:32:37.200

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We will now begin the public hearing portion of the meeting. As a reminder, you will have the opportunity to speak for 3 minutes at a time.

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00:32:37.710 --> 00:32:44.490

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The queue will stay open until 7:30 pm Mountain Time. At the end of that time, we will not take any more signups to speak.

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00:32:45.120 --> 00:32:50.430

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The meeting will continue until all commenters in the queue have had the opportunity to be heard.

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00:32:51.390 --> 00:33:01.350

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We welcome you to comment more than once. You will have 3 minutes to deliver your comment during your turn and then you may enter the queue to speak again until the queue is closed at 7:30.

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00:33:02.940 --> 00:33:07.260

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We ask that you spell your first and last name at the start of your comment.

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00:33:08.100 --> 00:33:21.690

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please refrain from questions or comments that contain vulgar or abusive language, personal attacks of any kind, offensive terms that target specific groups. Please be respectful to participants, presenters, and panelists.

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00:33:22.800 --> 00:33:34.110

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please remember participants may be joining from locations where family members and children can hear what is being said, and please remember this meeting is being recorded and your comments will be included in the Project record.

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00:33:37.260 --> 00:33:44.430

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You may now use the Raise Hand function, or star-nine for those joining by phone, to join the queue to give verbal comments.

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00:33:44.880 --> 00:33:59.670

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): When it is your turn to speak, we will unmute you. Watch the onscreen timer to track when your 3 minutes is up. At the end of 3 minutes, we will mute you and let the next speaker start their turn. I will announce speaker order as we go, and we'll also post it in the chat.

144

00:34:04.770 --> 00:34:09.120

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our first speaker is Peter Bishop. Peter, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

145

00:34:10.260 --> 00:34:12.930

Peter Bishop: Hi. Thank you. So, my name is Peter Bishop.

146

00:34:12.960 --> 00:34:14.580

Peter Bishop: I am a Laramie resident

147

00:34:15.720 --> 00:34:19.110

Peter Bishop: and I have lived in the Laramie community for about 11 years.

148

00:34:20.580 --> 00:34:31.200

Peter Bishop: And my biggest question is concerning the future of the economy, specific to Albany County, with such a development. I know we've been focusing quite a bit on the,

149

00:34:32.940 --> 00:34:36.090

Peter Bishop: you know, the impact on wildlife, the impact on the viewshed.

150

00:34:37.320 --> 00:34:43.860

Peter Bishop: And I guess it is in regards to viewshed. My curiosity—and I'm kind of new to this process, just I heard it, so I decided to show up to this meeting—

151

00:34:44.370 --> 00:34:51.390

Peter Bishop: is, you know, Albany County is one of the few counties that has been successful at growing organically its business community

152

00:34:52.320 --> 00:34:55.800

Peter Bishop: in relation to other counties because we have not traditionally had a lot of

153

00:34:56.550 --> 00:35:04.530

Peter Bishop: natural resources here, which has allowed us to grow a robust outdoor recreation economy that I know, within my own circles and business circles,

154

00:35:05.040 --> 00:35:13.020

Peter Bishop: there is a lot of people who are thinking about starting businesses in that area and are now very worried because, without having our unique access to wildlife

155

00:35:13.530 --> 00:35:17.280

Peter Bishop: and our viewshed, there's a real possibility that there will be

156

00:35:17.940 --> 00:35:28.110

Peter Bishop: a kind of loss of young people, which we already struggle with in this county, because the one reason that we live here, which is our access outdoor recreation and whatnot, will be directly affected, if not threatened.

157

00:35:28.530 --> 00:35:34.140

Peter Bishop: And so I'm curious, within the EIS process, to what degree has that been addressed and

158

00:35:35.820 --> 00:35:48.510

Peter Bishop: do you have a figure as to what the potential economic impact would be? And I know that might fall into the open-ended question, so you can't answer that, I get it, but I just want—I'm just curious about that, and I appreciate your time, and thank you for letting me speak.

159

00:35:52.560 --> 00:35:54.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Peter, for your comment.

160

00:35:59.280 --> 00:36:06.540

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And just as a reminder, you may use the Raise Hand function to sign up to speak at today's public hearing.

161

00:36:15.450 --> 00:36:21.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Looks like our next speaker will be Brett Wadsworth. Brett, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

162

00:36:23.340 --> 00:36:24.420

Brett Wadsworth: Hello, my name is Brett

163

00:36:24.750 --> 00:36:34.140

Brett Wadsworth: Wadsworth. I'm a resident of Albany County, living up in the Vedauwoo Area and it is a windy country. I know why they would like to put windmills up there.

164

00:36:35.760 --> 00:36:46.170

Brett Wadsworth: I was not able to read all the way through the environmental impact state report. Three-hundred-fifty-something pages was too much for me to get through last night when I finally got to it. But

165

00:36:46.710 --> 00:36:51.930

Brett Wadsworth: a couple of comments in there that caught my attention, in the early section that I was reading,

166

00:36:52.770 --> 00:37:03.540

Brett Wadsworth: mentioned, since the construction that provides for potential spread of invasive species would degrade aquatic habitat. These effects would dissipate shortly after construction activities cease.

167

00:37:04.110 --> 00:37:16.050

Brett Wadsworth: I'm bit skeptical about that. From a limited amount I know about invasive species, their impacts and their presence don't typically just dissipate. So, I'm a bit

168

00:37:17.250 --> 00:37:28.170

Brett Wadsworth: concerned about that inclusion and that particular statement. Further on, it says Project construction and operations activities and vehicle traffic would disturb habitat for small game

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00:37:28.920 --> 00:37:35.760

Brett Wadsworth: until the decommissioning of the Project and not expected to affect populations or communities of a species.

170

00:37:39.120 --> 00:37:56.010

Brett Wadsworth: Maybe? But for the life of a Project that's going to last 30 years, and if it's going to impact even small game for that period of time, I can't connect the dots on how that would not impact populations or communities of a species,

171

00:37:57.060 --> 00:38:00.750

Brett Wadsworth: at least in that local area. Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

172

00:38:05.070 --> 00:38:13.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Brett, for your comment. Up next, our next speaker will be Paul Montoya. Paul, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

173

00:38:15.750 --> 00:38:16.920

Paul Montoya: Thank you very much.

174

00:38:18.720 --> 00:38:25.440

Paul Montoya: My name is Paul Montoya. I'm a resident of Albany County and represent Albany County for Smart Energy Development.

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00:38:26.220 --> 00:38:36.540

Paul Montoya: David Fetter, the senior project manager at SWCA, gave a good report a little while ago, on the draft EIS that analyzed 15 different resources.

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00:38:36.960 --> 00:38:47.160

Paul Montoya: He noted that significant impact is shown for aesthetics and visual resources. The other 14 resources, he said, would not experience significant impacts.

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00:38:47.610 --> 00:38:52.740

Paul Montoya: For the visual resources portion of this study, he noted the key observation points were created.

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00:38:53.310 --> 00:39:01.920

Paul Montoya: At a maximum turbine height, visual impact was shown to have a moderate to strong impact at 76% of the key observation points.

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00:39:02.340 --> 00:39:10.980

Paul Montoya: Even at minimum turbine height, visual impact was shown to have moderate to strong impact at 54% of the key observation point locations.

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00:39:11.640 --> 00:39:17.070

Paul Montoya: This is a significant impact at the majority of the key observation points in the study.

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00:39:17.970 --> 00:39:31.170

Paul Montoya: It's my understanding that one of the roles of the Western Power Administration has in completing their EIS study is to work with ConnectGen to mitigate areas of the draft EIS that have significant impact.

182

00:39:31.770 --> 00:39:40.590

Paul Montoya: Now to everybody involved, it would seem almost impossible for ConnectGen to mitigate the visual impact that this large number of turbines would have

183

00:39:40.950 --> 00:39:47.400

Paul Montoya: on this large visual impact area and the visual impact on national monuments like Ames Monument.

184

00:39:48.300 --> 00:39:57.510

Paul Montoya: However, we at Albany County for Smart Energy Development have, can provide a solution that would allow ConnectGen to complete their energy Project,

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00:39:57.810 --> 00:40:05.490

Paul Montoya: for WAPA to accomplish their goal of having ConnectGen connect to their power grid, and tremendously reduce the visual impact.

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00:40:06.150 --> 00:40:15.360

Paul Montoya: ConnectGen, based in Houston, Texas, is a young company. According to their website, they have three wind generation projects and six solar projects in the works.

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00:40:15.750 --> 00:40:22.680

Paul Montoya: All but two of the solar projects are located in a latitude north of Albany County with less sun than Albany County.

188

00:40:23.250 --> 00:40:30.870

Paul Montoya: It would seem that all parties would be happy if ConnectGen were to convert the wind generation Project to a solar generation project,

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00:40:31.170 --> 00:40:39.150

Paul Montoya: utilizing 8,000 acres, rather than 26,000 acres, to generate the 500 megawatts to connect to the WAPA grid.

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00:40:39.690 --> 00:40:50.220

Paul Montoya: Residents of Albany County would not have to put up with the visual impact, blinking lights, noise, ice throw, and many other conditions that a wind generation facility would create.

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00:40:50.790 --> 00:40:59.880

Paul Montoya: In conclusion, we recommend that ConnectGen convert this Project to solar to eliminate the only major concern that the WAPA team has identified.

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00:41:00.480 --> 00:41:12.060

Paul Montoya: If ConnectGen refuses convert the Project, we would recommend a no-connection decision. Our written report will be filed as an official comment. Thank you for your time.

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00:41:16.140 --> 00:41:17.610

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Paul, for your comment.

194

00:41:22.020 --> 00:41:24.960

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So, the queue is still open. You may use the Raise Hand function at

195

00:41:26.400 --> 00:41:28.920

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): the bottom of your screen to sign up to speak.

196

00:41:44.280 --> 00:41:54.510

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): While we're waiting to see if anyone else signs up, we'll just scroll through and show you once again, the other methods, excuse me, the written

197

00:41:55.560 --> 00:41:58.470

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): avenues for submitting comments on the draft EIS.

198

00:41:59.880 --> 00:42:06.420

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Displayed on the screen is the email address, the Web address for the online form, and the mailing address.

199

00:42:07.860 --> 00:42:15.570

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please keep in mind that written comments submitted electronically via the online form or email are preferred.

200

00:42:16.620 --> 00:42:28.560

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): WAPA will accept public input at any time during the NEPA process; however, for your comments to be fully considered when the draft EIS is revised, they must be submitted by Monday, May 17, 2021.

201

00:42:30.660 --> 00:42:44.730

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And while WAPA can receive comments through the mail, please note that access to WAPA's Headquarters Office is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so written comments mailed to the WAPA Headquarters Office may be delayed in reaching the Project Team.

202

00:43:11.370 --> 00:43:16.770

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker will be Frederick Ames. Frederick, you may unmute and speak when you're ready.

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00:43:18.270 --> 00:43:18.810

Frederick L. Ames: Oh hi.

204

00:43:19.380 --> 00:43:22.050

Frederick L. Ames: I wanted to wait because I'm not a resident

205

00:43:22.110 --> 00:43:26.250

Frederick L. Ames: of Wyoming, but I am from Massachusetts.

206

00:43:27.540 --> 00:43:31.260

Frederick L. Ames: And I've submitted a written comment, excuse me, by email.

207

00:43:32.490 --> 00:43:38.580

Frederick L. Ames: But the one thing I question is that it appears, and this was in the article in the

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00:43:39.780 --> 00:43:49.320

Frederick L. Ames: Laramie Boomerang, that all they can do to mitigate the impact of the views from the Ames Monument has been done.

209

00:43:50.220 --> 00:44:03.750

Frederick L. Ames: And that's sort of the end of the story. So my concern is that there probably are, I hope, there are further efforts of mitigation and that there be more discussion of those. Thank you.

210

00:44:08.580 --> 00:44:09.960

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Frederick, for your comment.

211

00:44:41.370 --> 00:44:47.040

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker will be John Davis. John, you may unmute and speak when you're ready.

212

00:44:49.230 --> 00:44:51.720

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Also, please remember to spell your first and last name.

213

00:44:52.980 --> 00:44:56.250

John Davis: Well, thank you. It's pretty easy. It's J-O-H-N,

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00:44:56.670 --> 00:45:01.800

John Davis: first name, D-A-V-I-S for the last game and

215

00:45:03.090 --> 00:45:06.600

John Davis: I'm glad to have an audience with you the.

216

00:45:07.920 --> 00:45:17.580

John Davis: We bought and built in Wyoming in 2005, and we're in Tie Siding at 244 Elk Crossing Road.

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00:45:18.780 --> 00:45:25.590

John Davis: Tie Siding, Wyoming, although I am an Indiana resident most of the year, but

218

00:45:27.840 --> 00:45:41.130

John Davis: as we became acclimated to the area, as a history buff, I kind of became immersed in the history of the area and the road that leads to our ranch,

219

00:45:41.640 --> 00:46:01.080

John Davis: to Fish Creek Ranch Preserve, is Cherokee Park Road. And you might say that, you know, this isn't Cherokee country, that this isn't a tribe that's indigenous to the area. And that's true. But the Cherokee Tribe, after they've been displaced from Florida,

220

00:46:02.550 --> 00:46:07.770

John Davis: took up residence in Georgia and then, when gold was discovered,

221

00:46:08.940 --> 00:46:13.620

John Davis: out at Sutter's Fort 1849—the 49ers—

222

00:46:14.670 --> 00:46:37.500

John Davis: they made their way west on a trail that became known as the Cherokee Trail. This isn't the same Cherokee Trail that is the Trail of Tears, but this is the trail that became the Overland Trail that leads up to what is now a restaurant, the Cattlemens'

223

00:46:38.550 --> 00:46:51.390

John Davis: or Cavalrymen's, and it was the overland travel for Ben Holidays' Overland Stage route and so there's all kinds of history throughout

224

00:46:52.320 --> 00:47:08.160

John Davis: this impact area that that I don't see anybody defending or advocating on behalf of. The Ames Monument should have its own advocates, but the trail that became

225

00:47:09.600 --> 00:47:25.260

John Davis: Highway 287, formerly the Overland Trail and then before that the Cherokee Trail, these are all things that need to be preserved, or at least acknowledged, and I don't see that happening in this process. So,

226

00:47:27.630 --> 00:47:40.920

John Davis: you don't need somebody from Indiana to tell you how to do your stuff out there, but at the same time, facts are facts, and history is history, and I implore you to preserve it. Thank you.

227

00:47:46.230 --> 00:47:47.520

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, John, for your comment.

228

00:47:51.510 --> 00:47:53.850

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder, the queue is still open.

229

00:47:56.940 --> 00:48:02.670

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You may use the Raise Hand function, or if you're joining us by telephone, you can dial star-nine

230

00:48:05.010 --> 00:48:07.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): to let us know that you wish to submit a verbal comment.

231

00:48:37.260 --> 00:48:39.480

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Next comment comes from

232

00:48:40.950 --> 00:48:56.820

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): someone who's joining us by phone. Phone number ending in 0881. Commenter, you can unmute and begin speaking when you're ready. Please remember to say your first and last name and also spell your first and last name at the beginning of your comment.

233

00:49:12.240 --> 00:49:21.540

Christine Kratt: Hi this is Christine Kratt. C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E K-R-A-T-T. Thanks so much for taking my comment today.

234

00:49:23.340 --> 00:49:33.450

Christine Kratt: I have been living in the Colorado-Wyoming area for the last 25 years. I'm a veterinarian and I'm very concerned about the wildlife.

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00:49:35.160 --> 00:49:48.330

Christine Kratt: I know that these turbines, and I've studied it quite a bit, biologists definitely there's a lot of research papers out there, the harm they have these turbines to our beautiful

236

00:49:50.130 --> 00:50:00.150

Christine Kratt: birds of prey which are federally protected. These birds of prey cannot reproduce at the rate that they're being killed by the spinning turbines.

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00:50:00.900 --> 00:50:07.440

Christine Kratt: For those of you who haven't looked at this carefully enough, these are birds that live in

238

00:50:08.130 --> 00:50:18.900

Christine Kratt: in a 3D-environment and, with that, they're having social interactions, they're looking for their source of food below, they're

239

00:50:19.530 --> 00:50:32.700

Christine Kratt: mating, they're raising their young, teaching them how to fly, and when turbines are spinning like that, it literally is killing them just by chopping them in half, breaking their wings.

240

00:50:33.450 --> 00:50:45.300

Christine Kratt: We are very familiar with the fact that, you know, companies like ConnectGen, you know, try to pick up the dead birds, so no one will know that they're there.

241

00:50:46.110 --> 00:51:01.950

Christine Kratt: And it's really a shame that we're not more concerned about that. Furthermore, as you all know, this pathway through the basin is a migratory pathway for a lot of the elk and pronghorn and other animals

242

00:51:02.940 --> 00:51:13.680

Christine Kratt: that rely on it. And the disruption of roads, the disruption of—these wind turbines also create an infrasound

243

00:51:14.070 --> 00:51:25.170

Christine Kratt: which is very difficult on these animals. It alters their ability to perceive their environment and have their normal social behaviors.

244

00:51:26.070 --> 00:51:36.780

Christine Kratt: I think that's a real shame these animals got to find another place to live. I've been driving around Wyoming, I'm familiar with the area, there are plenty of other alternatives and,

245

00:51:37.500 --> 00:51:42.450

Christine Kratt: you know, there's large branches that are set aside from these migratory pathways.

246

00:51:42.990 --> 00:51:51.720

Christine Kratt: And I just wish ConnectGen would look for an alternate location. Yes, there are transmission lines—and that's super convenient for you

247

00:51:52.620 --> 00:51:58.950

Christine Kratt: to save money and so forth, but when it comes down to this, is it really worth it, is it really worth the business?

248

00:51:59.700 --> 00:52:11.070

Christine Kratt: I'd studied also turbine energy generation, and it is the most inefficient way of accessing this energy source.

249

00:52:11.700 --> 00:52:30.900

Christine Kratt: Even oil wells are easier on the environment than something like turbines and the audacity of wanting to build these large turbines that are only meant, really, for the oceans is a real shame that you would even think about putting them up in the Larimer

250

00:52:32.040 --> 00:52:33.030

Christine Kratt: Basin, so.

251

00:52:33.210 --> 00:52:37.050

Sarah Lupis: I'm sorry, commenter, your time is up.

252

00:52:38.310 --> 00:52:39.720

Christine Kratt: Okay, thank you so much.

253

00:52:40.020 --> 00:52:41.910

Sarah Lupis: Thank you for your, thank you for your comment.

254

00:52:43.590 --> 00:52:51.600

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If you joined us late, just a reminder that folks are welcome to join the queue again if you have additional comments.

255

00:52:52.620 --> 00:52:55.440

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Comments will be taken at 3-minute intervals

256

00:52:56.790 --> 00:53:11.610

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): and then we'll let the next person have a turn, but you may return to the queue if you still have more. Our next speaker will be Peter Bishop. Peter, you can unmute and begin when you're ready. Please remember to say and spell your first and last name, thank you.

257

00:53:12.690 --> 00:53:19.740

Peter Bishop: Thank you so much for let me speak. My name is Peter Bishop, P-E-T-E-R, Bishop, B-I-S-H-O-P.

258

00:53:20.790 --> 00:53:27.660

Peter Bishop: I'm also—following off the previous commenter—I'm also very curious as to why this Project is—

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00:53:28.110 --> 00:53:40.290

Peter Bishop: I understand the argument that's close to the transmission line going towards Craig, but I don't understand, out of all the real estate that we have obviously in Albany County and throughout the state, why this is such an urgent,

260

00:53:41.790 --> 00:53:49.890

Peter Bishop: such an urgent need for this Project. Also considering that there isn't exactly a market for this energy right now, which it sounds like in the EIS presentation that,

261

00:53:50.160 --> 00:53:59.220

Peter Bishop: that is a very large kind of argument as to why this Project is being developed. And so as a Laramie and Albany County resident, taxpayer,

262

00:54:00.570 --> 00:54:08.910

Peter Bishop: I am extremely concerned, and I would appreciate some information on this because right now, I don't understand how this is in the interest of Albany County.

263

00:54:09.630 --> 00:54:16.110

Peter Bishop: We're being asked to give up something that is irreversible, something that we will never get back for the sake of

264

00:54:16.680 --> 00:54:21.720

Peter Bishop: helping an out-of-state energy company that has already invested in oil, so it's not that green,

265

00:54:22.650 --> 00:54:35.940

Peter Bishop: make a little bit extra money by connecting the transmission line at the expense of our way of life, and at the expense of what we hold dear, and at the expense of what makes Albany County Albany County. That's all my time, and I appreciate you taking my call.

266

00:54:39.270 --> 00:54:40.560

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Peter, for your comment.

267

00:54:45.270 --> 00:54:52.800

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue is open, you may sign up to speak using the Raise Hand button, or, if you're joining us by phone, you can dial star-nine.

268

00:54:54.540 --> 00:54:56.850

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The queue will stay open until about 7:30 tonight.

269

00:55:08.280 --> 00:55:09.780

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker is

270

00:55:11.220 --> 00:55:19.440

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Even Brande. Hope I'm getting that right. Evan, you can unmute and then go ahead and say and spell your first and last name, and begin when you're ready.

271

00:55:39.810 --> 00:55:41.940

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You can go ahead and begin whenever you're ready.

272

00:55:54.900 --> 00:55:57.960

Even Brande: I apologize, my microphone doesn't seem to be working. Can you hear me now?

273

00:55:58.380 --> 00:55:59.820

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We sure can. Go right ahead.

274

00:56:00.300 --> 00:56:17.370

Even Brande: apologize Even Brande, E-V-E-N B-R-A-N-D-E. I'm a long-term tech entrepreneur here in Laramie and I've been watching this Project for a while. I wanted to second Paul Montoya's suggestion about converting to solar.

275

00:56:18.480 --> 00:56:23.070

Even Brande: According to a book I recently read by Bill Gates on climate change,

276

00:56:23.520 --> 00:56:40.110

Even Brande: solar is about five to 10 times more effective when measured in watts generated per square foot or square meter than wind. Wind is—next to firewood—wind is the least effective of all the power sources we have available to us today.

277

00:56:41.910 --> 00:56:57.720

Even Brande: The second question, and that I haven't seen and I haven't read all of the environmental impact studies about all the concrete that will go in the ground. I'm curious to know how much, how many tons of concrete will be used for this Project?

278

00:56:59.970 --> 00:57:06.780

Even Brande: The amount of CO₂ released for every ton of cement produced is about a ton of CO₂.

279

00:57:07.230 --> 00:57:20.940

Even Brande: So, for every ton of cement put on the ground, we're releasing a ton of CO₂ into the atmosphere, and I would like to learn a little bit more about that. So, thank you for the opportunity to comment, and I appreciate you allowing us to be involved.

280

00:57:24.570 --> 00:57:25.890

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Even, for your comment.

281

00:57:59.490 --> 00:58:05.490

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker is Karen Schertz. Karen, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

282

00:58:11.730 --> 00:58:16.710

Karen Schertz: My name is Karen Schertz, K-A-R-E-N S-C-H-E-R-T-Z.

283

00:58:17.730 --> 00:58:34.620

Karen Schertz: My husband and I have lived in the Hidden Hills area of Albany County just above the border, and what we have observed over the years, since 1994, is that this land is like tundra. It is so fragile that once disturbed, it will not come back.

284

00:58:35.670 --> 00:58:48.000

Karen Schertz: It opens itself up to bring in cheatgrass and other noxious weeds, and it is irreplaceable. It just never comes back the same. We have done some

285

00:58:52.410 --> 00:58:59.040

Karen Schertz: geothermal and then we try to re-seed afterwards, with a special mix from the Extension Service.

286

00:58:59.460 --> 00:59:13.650

Karen Schertz: It has not come back the same as it was. And so they're putting in 60 miles of road and all the destruction from the wind turbine bases. I just don't see that this area will be the same after this. Thank you for the time.

287

00:59:18.930 --> 00:59:20.280

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Karen, for your comment.

288

00:59:33.750 --> 00:59:37.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue remains open. You can use the Raise Hand button

289

00:59:39.180 --> 00:59:43.980

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): to let us know you'd like to speak, or if you're joining us by telephone, please dial star-nine.

290

01:00:21.960 --> 01:00:29.280

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment is from Kirk Stone. Kirk, you can unmute and begin when you're ready. Please remember to spell your first and last name.

291

01:00:31.890 --> 01:00:33.720

Kirk Stone: Okay, this is Kirk Stone. Can you hear me?

292

01:00:34.530 --> 01:00:36.090

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We sure can. Go ahead when you're ready.

293

01:00:36.870 --> 01:00:52.590

Kirk Stone: My spelling is K-I-R-K S-T-O-N-E and I'm a property owner up in the Vedauwoo area and I've only just gotten time to get on this meeting so I'm not sure what people have commented, so far. I would

294

01:00:53.730 --> 01:01:04.350

Kirk Stone: second the statements by the last speaker about the fragility of this land in this area. And some of my greater concerns are for the wildlife in the area.

295

01:01:04.860 --> 01:01:15.660

Kirk Stone: There are very large elk herds and antelope herds that frequent this area and, as well as the predatory birds. I've seen people speak on other meetings about,

296

01:01:16.170 --> 01:01:24.330

Kirk Stone: you know, all these don't kill birds, well they don't kill swallows, but they do kill predatory birds. I'm a professional helicopter pilot

297

01:01:24.810 --> 01:01:32.520

Kirk Stone: and I've actually done wildlife research on wind farms and spoken directly with the wildlife managers that are doing the counts.

298

01:01:33.150 --> 01:01:40.950

Kirk Stone: And I flew one in California that was smaller than the acreage of this one, and they were killing in the neighborhood of 1,900 raptors a year.

299

01:01:41.670 --> 01:01:52.590

Kirk Stone: So, you know, we have a significant hawk breeding ground in this part of the state and the fledgling birds, when they make their first migration, they go right through this corridor.

300

01:01:53.160 --> 01:02:03.150

Kirk Stone: And that's just going to absolutely decimate that species of hawk, so I think we need to look very seriously at how we're going to affect this area

301

01:02:03.900 --> 01:02:13.650

Kirk Stone: and be diligent in it because this is a very permanent damage across the board. Thank you for your time and I'll look forward to hearing more. Thank you.

302

01:02:16.710 --> 01:02:17.970

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Kirk, for your comment.

303

01:02:22.050 --> 01:02:30.660

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): For anyone who's joined us late, just a reminder that the queue will be open until 7:30. You can use the Raise Hand function to sign up to speak.

304

01:02:31.590 --> 01:02:47.790

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We welcome you to sign up more than once. Each comment will be given 3 minutes, at which time we'll let the next person have a turn. But you can return to the queue as often as you like until the queue is closed at 7:30.

305

01:02:49.080 --> 01:03:03.330

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Also, in case you joined us late, a reminder that a recording of this meeting will be posted on the Project website, following the hearing, as well as transcripts from tonight's event. Those will also be posted

306

01:03:04.530 --> 01:03:06.420

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): on the Project website, following the hearing.

307

01:04:04.560 --> 01:04:10.950

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment is from John Davis. John, you may unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

308

01:04:12.330 --> 01:04:33.750

Susan Davis: Good evening, this is Susan Davis. S-U-S-A-N D-A-V-I-S. Our home is 224 Elk Crossing in Tie Siding and I wish to bring to your attention, I disagree with the findings that were reported in the draft proposed

309

01:04:34.950 --> 01:04:42.720

Susan Davis: for this Project because I do believe that this so severely harm our large

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01:04:44.010 --> 01:04:55.080

Susan Davis: animal, wild, wildlife in the area and it will certainly, as has been said already this evening, ruin our prairie lands.

311

01:04:56.610 --> 01:05:03.960

Susan Davis: Turbines of this height have not been tested in areas like this, as mentioned before. They were originally designed for oceans.

312

01:05:05.190 --> 01:05:22.650

Susan Davis: This company does not have vast experience in building these. Why are we letting them use Wyoming as a testing ground? I simply do not understand that. And then to send the power all to other states. I think this is ridiculous.

313

01:05:24.120 --> 01:05:36.600

Susan Davis: The destruction that will happen to the perennials that make our prairie a prairie will not come back. It will instead be the annual cheatgrass, which is extremely flammable.

314

01:05:37.320 --> 01:05:49.650

Susan Davis: This will severely impact our elk, our mule deer, and pronghorn and those are migratory paths, just like it is for the raptors.

315

01:05:50.880 --> 01:05:59.160

Susan Davis: The roads will have an impact and will cause an impediment to many of the smaller animals.

316

01:05:59.880 --> 01:06:21.300

Susan Davis: The water quality—nothing's been tested of what's going to happen with the bases of these huge towers dug down in our shallow aquifer. And the water sources then for not only the wildlife, but the people who live in these areas. There's been no studies. And this

317

01:06:22.350 --> 01:06:28.290

Susan Davis: is truly inadequate preparation for an operation such as this.

318

01:06:29.520 --> 01:06:45.480

Susan Davis: And lastly, the fire danger, as I've shared with you before. This area backs right up to the Roosevelt National Forest. The Roosevelt National Forest is a tinderbox encompassing

319

01:06:46.470 --> 01:06:59.940

Susan Davis: the beetle kill that is prevalent throughout the whole area—so we have dry, dead wood, we have a drought-prevalent area, and

320

01:07:01.650 --> 01:07:17.610

Susan Davis: the lightning that is drawn to these towers and then that shoots down from these towers is such a danger and there's no provision for the safety of the area from ConnectGen on this. They've ignored it.

321

01:07:18.630 --> 01:07:23.280

Susan Davis: I appreciate you considering these points. Thank you for your time.

322

01:07:27.420 --> 01:07:28.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Susan, for your comment.

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01:07:44.520 --> 01:07:45.450

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder,

324

01:07:48.000 --> 01:07:57.840

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): plenty of time to still sign up to speak. You can use the Raise Hand button or dial star-nine, if you're joining us by telephone, to let us know you'd like to deliver a comment.

325

01:10:06.660 --> 01:10:12.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next commenter is Karen Schertz. Karen, you may unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

326

01:10:14.160 --> 01:10:23.430

Karen Schertz: My name is Karen Schertz and I'd like to talk again. It's K-A-R-E-N S-C-H-E-R-T-Z. The thing that occurred to me today is that

327

01:10:24.450 --> 01:10:29.190

Karen Schertz: we are not against renewable energy and the state, we actually support it.

328

01:10:30.270 --> 01:10:35.550

Karen Schertz: But the question I have is, I understand the need to be near the towers.

329

01:10:36.300 --> 01:10:45.000

Karen Schertz: What is the cost to move it to a better location and another part of the county, which it would still benefit the county, and

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01:10:45.540 --> 01:10:57.420

Karen Schertz: the cost of that move may definitely be worth the cost to save what is so special about the gateway into Wyoming and the wildlife and the fragileness of this valley.

331

01:10:58.020 --> 01:11:15.720

Karen Schertz: And I think that that is a question I feel needs to be answered. What are the other alternatives for this in Albany County? We know the state needs the money. We know the local schools need the money, but there has to be other solutions to this. That's my question. Thank you.

332

01:11:25.170 --> 01:11:26.370

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you for your comments.

333

01:12:13.620 --> 01:12:19.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker is Grant Lindstrom. Grant, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

334

01:12:20.370 --> 01:12:23.550

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Please remember to say and spell your first and last name. Thank you.

335

01:12:25.140 --> 01:12:34.530

Grant Lindstrom: Hello, my name is Grant Lindstrom, G-R-A-N-T L-I-N-D-S-T-R-O-M. And I just, I'm not sure,

336

01:12:36.180 --> 01:12:37.980

Grant Lindstrom: I just, I haven't read the

337

01:12:39.150 --> 01:12:50.400

Grant Lindstrom: paper on it and stuff, but the one thing I'm concerned a little bit about is the noise of them, I assume, as they're bigger, they're more noisy. That seems like that goes with, as you make things bigger, there's more noise.

338

01:12:50.880 --> 01:13:07.440

Grant Lindstrom: And that probably isn't a big issue for a lot of people, but my property is directly adjacent to this and, at least, the way the last map I saw, there was one of them that was as close as you get it to my property line. So I, it seems to me, I don't know if that's been looked at.

339

01:13:08.460 --> 01:13:17.340

Grant Lindstrom: I would appreciate if they gave a little more buffer to non-adjointing landowners. It seems to me they went to the bare minimum they could go to. If they wanted to be good neighbors,

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01:13:18.030 --> 01:13:28.110

Grant Lindstrom: it seems to me, should give you more a half a mile. You got enough property to give everybody that's non-adjointing a half-a-mile buffer. It makes it a lot nicer. Thanks, that's all I have to say.

341

01:13:31.380 --> 01:13:32.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Grant, for your comment.

342

01:13:54.930 --> 01:13:56.700

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from

343

01:13:58.170 --> 01:14:00.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): a participant joining us by phone.

344

01:14:01.290 --> 01:14:03.690

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Phone number ending in 0881.

345

01:14:04.770 --> 01:14:07.410

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Go ahead and unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

346

01:14:09.390 --> 01:14:11.040

Christine Kratt: Hi, thanks again so much.

347

01:14:11.040 --> 01:14:25.260

Christine Kratt: This is Christine Kratt, Christine spelled C-H-R-I-S-T-I-N-E, last name's Kratt, K-R-A-T-T. I already spoke about the wildlife because I am a doctor of veterinary medicine,

348

01:14:26.220 --> 01:14:35.670

Christine Kratt: but what I'd like to really speak now and to kind of build up some of the comments I've heard since I last spoke is that

349

01:14:36.300 --> 01:14:47.400

Christine Kratt: it seems to me a lot of this is about convenience, and making money, and money going back to the county. Well actually, that's really not true. What's going to happen

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01:14:48.360 --> 01:15:01.170

Christine Kratt: to us as property owners, our property values are going to significantly drop. I can't tell you how many people I've spoken to who would not at all buy a property near

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01:15:01.800 --> 01:15:11.580

Christine Kratt: turbines. There are, in fact, health risks. A lot of big companies like ConnectGen want to kind of hide that under the rug. But truly,

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01:15:12.300 --> 01:15:17.010

Christine Kratt: even though, in many cases, they keep saying that we cannot hear these turbines,

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01:15:17.400 --> 01:15:29.490

Christine Kratt: there's the infrasound and that actually has damaging consequences to every cell in our body—again I'm a doctor, and I know these consequences. And a lot of times

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01:15:29.910 --> 01:15:40.290

Christine Kratt: they're hidden, they can't be explained. These are microscopic changes that our cells actually react to these kinds of sound waves. Another thing about

355

01:15:41.580 --> 01:15:44.790

Christine Kratt: this Project, too, is that

356

01:15:46.020 --> 01:15:54.480

Christine Kratt: there's this—the spinning of the turbines. What happens is our brains actually key in on that movement

357

01:15:54.840 --> 01:16:03.690

Christine Kratt: and it's very, very damaging to our brains. Just from a psychological standpoint, a lot of people get vitiligo, they get nausea,

358

01:16:04.680 --> 01:16:29.760

Christine Kratt: and other more impactful health consequences. So I'd really like for doctors to opine on this situation. And, again, there are alternatives. I'm not just asking a question here I'm actually saying that this Project should be moved to safer alternatives away from people, away from animals,

359

01:16:31.980 --> 01:16:41.370

Christine Kratt: distant from property owners, where they could lose a lot of what they've invested over the years in buying these properties.

360

01:16:42.420 --> 01:16:48.300

Christine Kratt: You know, we can't get that back. And I just think it's disgusting that a

361

01:16:48.690 --> 01:16:55.440

Christine Kratt: company, at our expense, would do this for a little money. We're actually being hurt, those of us

362

01:16:55.740 --> 01:17:02.370

Christine Kratt: in Albany County are being hurt. You can give as much money as you want to schools. We could do that deliberately too.

363

01:17:02.640 --> 01:17:12.540

Christine Kratt: What we really need to do is save our personal investments as well. This is really a shame. We're not going to be able to sell our properties like we would have in the past.

364

01:17:13.050 --> 01:17:21.420

Christine Kratt: They're going to plummet, our values are going to plummet. Thanks so much for considering these comments. Please look for alternative solutions. Find far away ranches.

365

01:17:21.510 --> 01:17:23.100

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, commenter, your time is up.

366

01:17:24.630 --> 01:17:25.080

Christine Kratt: Thank you.

367

01:17:26.100 --> 01:17:27.300

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you for your comment.

368

01:17:32.340 --> 01:17:42.150

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So just a reminder, you can use the Raise Hand button at the bottom of your screen, or if you're calling in tonight, you can dial star-nine.

369

01:18:22.920 --> 01:18:25.800

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And I'll just take a moment to remind you that

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01:18:27.600 --> 01:18:35.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): about the email address, the web address for the online form, and the mailing address. Those are all displayed on the screen.

371

01:18:37.980 --> 01:18:46.590

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): This information is also available on the Project's website. Written comments, submitted electronically by the online form or email, are preferred.

372

01:18:47.310 --> 01:18:59.970

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): WAPA will accept public comment at any time during the NEPA process; however, for your comments to be fully considered when the draft EIS is revised, they must be submitted by Monday, May 17, 2021.

373

01:19:02.040 --> 01:19:16.290

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And just a reminder that, while WAPA can receive comments through the mail, access to WAPAs Headquarters Office is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so written comments mailed to the WAPA Headquarters Office may be delayed in reaching the Project Team.

374

01:19:17.310 --> 01:19:23.010

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The recording of this hearing and the hearing transcripts will be posted on the Project website, following this meeting,

375

01:19:24.690 --> 01:19:30.390

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): as well as questions and the responses—those will also be posted on the Project website, following the hearing.

376

01:21:04.470 --> 01:21:16.590

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So, during the hearing, so far, we've received a few questions from commenters, and I'd like to go ahead and share with you some of those questions and their responses.

377

01:21:18.120 --> 01:21:29.730

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So, this question from a commenter: Albany County has a robust outdoor economy. Does the EIS address the potential economic impact of this Project?

378

01:21:31.080 --> 01:21:32.460

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And the panel's response:

379

01:21:33.570 --> 01:21:46.290

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Section 3.12 of the draft EIS discusses social and economic resources. After reading this section of the draft EIS, you may still have questions or disagree with the information presented there.

380

01:21:47.070 --> 01:21:59.070

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): In that case, please submit specific comments on those points and provide any additional information you might have. The Project Team can then assess your input and make appropriate changes to the document.

381

01:22:02.070 --> 01:22:09.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Another question, also from a commenter: Is there an impact to access to outdoor recreation areas?

382

01:22:11.190 --> 01:22:25.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response: The Project Area is 80% private land and 20% state land. Access to publicly accessible state land would be restricted during construction for safety, but would remain accessible

383

01:22:26.490 --> 01:22:40.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): for recreation during Project operations. The draft EIS concludes that the Project would temporarily restrict or close portions of recreation areas in the Project Area; however, the use of recreation areas would not be entirely precluded.

384

01:22:41.940 --> 01:22:51.330

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The full analysis of the impact, excuse me, impact to access to outdoor recreation can be found in section 3.11 of the draft EIS.

385

01:22:53.130 --> 01:22:58.740

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): After reading this section of the draft EIS, you may still have questions or disagree with the information presented there.

386

01:22:59.310 --> 01:23:10.200

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): In that case, please submit specific comments on those points and provide any additional information you might have. The Project Team can then assess your input and make appropriate changes to the document.

387

01:23:52.650 --> 01:23:55.410

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The next question was asked in the Q&A.

388

01:23:58.770 --> 01:24:08.310

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The question is: Is one role of the WAPA team to help mitigate any impacts that have been identified as significant by the draft EIS before connection to the WAPA grid?

389

01:24:10.890 --> 01:24:20.670

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response: The proposed Project is a connection proposal. WAPA does encourage developers to implement all reasonable and feasible environmental protection measures.

390

01:24:21.150 --> 01:24:31.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): In addition to the measures developed in the EIS, the National Historic Preservation Act Section 7 process may result in additional mitigation measures for Ames Monument and other

391

01:24:32.340 --> 01:24:44.250

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): eligible historic properties. And the second part of this question: As far as visual impacts—impact concerns that have been identified, cannot be easily mitigated,

392

01:24:45.990 --> 01:24:50.340

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): would WAPA suggest to ConnectGen that they convert a wind project to solar?

393

01:24:52.410 --> 01:24:58.470

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And the panel's response: WAPA's role is to consider the interconnection request submitted by ConnectGen.

394

01:24:59.100 --> 01:25:13.800

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): While WAPA will make suggestions to developers, WAPA ultimately does not have regulatory authority over the proposed action for the wind farm that has been considered as a connected action. Your suggestion for an alternate energy generation source has been noted.

395

01:25:28.110 --> 01:25:30.480

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The next question is from a commenter.

396

01:25:32.610 --> 01:25:40.110

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Question is: Why is there such an urgent need for this Project, especially when there isn't a market need for this energy?

397

01:25:41.130 --> 01:25:42.210

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

398

01:25:43.530 --> 01:25:56.850

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): There is a market for the wind energy. The Project is responding to the increasing demand for renewable energy power. Many utilities in Wyoming and surrounding states have announced plans to procure wind energy in the coming years.

399

01:25:57.990 --> 01:26:10.920

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): This demand from utilities for renewable energy is a result of multiple factors including the low cost of wind energy, state renewable energy portfolio requirements, and the planned retirements of thermal generation plants.

400

01:26:15.210 --> 01:26:25.590

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The next question is also from a commenter. The question is: How many tons of concrete will be put in the ground for this Project, and have the carbon impact of this Project been considered?

401

01:26:27.120 --> 01:26:28.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

402

01:26:29.490 --> 01:26:38.970

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The amount of concrete that will be required for the Project will depend on the final design and, more specifically the number of turbine foundations and foundation types that will be constructed.

403

01:26:40.200 --> 01:26:56.100

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): At this time, a precise estimate of tons of concrete has not been determined for more information on the impact of concrete production for the Project, including air quality and greenhouse gas impacts. Please see section 3.3 of the draft environmental impact statement.

404

01:27:05.640 --> 01:27:19.440

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And I'll share one more question and comment—question and response with you now. The question is: What are the other alternatives for this Project in the county? Could it be located somewhere else in the county so that it still benefits the county?

405

01:27:21.270 --> 01:27:22.350

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

406

01:27:23.610 --> 01:27:26.340

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Prior to beginning development of the Rail Tie Wind Project,

407

01:27:28.200 --> 01:27:33.060

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): ConnectGen reviewed possible locations for the wind Project across the entire state of Wyoming.

408

01:27:34.020 --> 01:27:46.770

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Dozens of factors, including but not limited to the wind resource, availability of transmission, and avoidance of environmentally sensitive areas, determined that the current Project location was the best location for this wind Project.

409

01:27:58.920 --> 01:28:07.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue remains open. You may sign up to speak using the Raise Hand button, or if you're joining us by phone, dial star-nine.

410

01:30:19.530 --> 01:30:21.480

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So, we had another question come in.

411

01:30:23.880 --> 01:30:26.490

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): I'll read you the question and the response from the panel.

412

01:30:28.140 --> 01:30:34.440

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The question is: What does the EIS say about property values surrounding the proposed Project Area?

413

01:30:36.030 --> 01:30:46.560

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response: Section 3.12 of the draft EIS contains information on social and economic resources, including impacts to property values.

414

01:30:47.280 --> 01:30:53.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The draft EIS concluded that the Project would not be expected to materially decrease property values for nearby homes.

415

01:30:54.390 --> 01:31:05.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Relevant studies of the effects of wind facilities on residential property values have shown small increases and decreases that are not statistically significant related to the announcement or presence of wind facilities

416

01:31:06.000 --> 01:31:10.800

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): and any predicted or observed changes are influenced by other multiple factors.

417

01:31:11.670 --> 01:31:17.550

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): After reading this section of the draft EIS, you may still have questions or disagree with the information presented there.

418

01:31:18.330 --> 01:31:29.220

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): In that case, please submit specific comments on those points and provide any additional information you might have. The Project Team can then assess your input and make appropriate changes to the document.

419

01:31:32.490 --> 01:31:38.070

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next commenter is John Davis. John, you can unmute and speak when you're ready.

420

01:31:39.300 --> 01:31:40.050

John Davis: Okay, thank you.

421

01:31:40.410 --> 01:31:40.680

John Davis: and

422

01:31:41.970 --> 01:31:45.000

John Davis: I'm talking about the property values here.

423

01:31:46.800 --> 01:31:49.050

John Davis: My wife is coaching me here.

424

01:31:50.370 --> 01:31:56.700

John Davis: I am John Davis, J-O-H-N D-A-V-I-S. And to the extent that

425

01:31:57.930 --> 01:32:04.440

John Davis: our property values have been decreased by the prospect of the wind farm

426

01:32:05.550 --> 01:32:14.010

John Davis: is really not arguable. Our value went down from \$804,000 to

427

01:32:15.960 --> 01:32:27.750

John Davis: an amount \$157,000 less than that. And this isn't something I advocated. This isn't, you know, someone that I hired to come in and

428

01:32:28.650 --> 01:32:35.160

John Davis: try to get a lower number for. This is what the county assessor sent me. And Grant

429

01:32:35.850 --> 01:32:47.100

John Davis: Showacre won't say, and he cannot say, that this is because of the wind farm. There are obviously other factors in his world, but in my world,

430

01:32:47.790 --> 01:33:11.970

John Davis: there are not. We look right into the viewscape of this. And so, when people say there's no effect on value, here's \$157,000 diminution in value on one 35-acre tract. And I don't know how else you can configure this but to say that that's

431

01:33:13.170 --> 01:33:15.720

John Davis: the result of this. So,

432

01:33:17.310 --> 01:33:19.800

John Davis: I don't want anybody to think that

433

01:33:20.940 --> 01:33:36.720

John Davis: there is no effect on value here. They may want to make you think there isn't, but there is, and I've got living proof to my benefit here. My taxes will actually be less because of this, but

434

01:33:37.920 --> 01:33:47.130

John Davis: \$157,000 off of \$804,000 is precisely where I find myself, thank you.

435

01:33:52.020 --> 01:33:53.220

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, John, for your comment.

436

01:34:01.950 --> 01:34:04.020

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue remains open.

437

01:34:05.280 --> 01:34:11.850

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You can use the Raise Hand button to indicate that you would like to speak, or if you're joining us by phone, please dial star-nine.

438

01:35:19.950 --> 01:35:24.750

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from Karen Schertz. Karen, you may unmute and speak when you're ready.

439

01:35:27.840 --> 01:35:43.020

Karen Schertz: My name is Karen Schertz, K-A-R-E-N S-C-H-E-R-T-Z. I am not a Realtor, but I am aware of the fact that Realtors are losing business, particularly the honest ones that are telling about the perspective wind turbines,

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01:35:43.680 --> 01:35:56.250

Karen Schertz: and people are walking away. I suggest that a study or a survey be made of the local Realtors as to whether this is really happening and that

441

01:35:57.870 --> 01:36:04.590

Karen Schertz: how this is reflecting on our values. And that's what I have to say. Thank you.

442

01:36:08.850 --> 01:36:10.290

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Karen, for your comment and

443

01:36:10.290 --> 01:36:11.100

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): suggestion.

444

01:37:08.580 --> 01:37:15.150

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Looks like a couple of other responses are ready, so I'll go ahead and read you two more questions and panel responses.

445

01:37:16.710 --> 01:37:26.460

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So, this question comes from a commenter. The question is: What is the cost to move it—the Project—to a better location in a better part of the county?

446

01:37:27.990 --> 01:37:29.040

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

447

01:37:30.060 --> 01:37:39.870

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Because WAPA did not receive an interconnection request related to facilities in other locations of Albany County, no cost comparison was available or produced.

448

01:37:47.100 --> 01:37:49.920

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And the next question also from a commenter:

449

01:37:51.330 --> 01:37:55.290

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): What is the noise associated with the wind turbines, has that been looked at?

450

01:37:56.880 --> 01:37:57.900

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

451

01:37:59.070 --> 01:38:05.760

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Section 3.10 of the draft EIS discusses public health and safety, including noise and vibrations.

452

01:38:06.630 --> 01:38:21.330

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If, after reading this section, you have questions or disagree with the information presented, please submit specific comments on those points and provide any additional information you might have. The Project Team can then assess your input and make appropriate changes to the document.

453

01:38:33.870 --> 01:38:41.010

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And just a reminder that the queue remains open. Please use the Raise Hand button to indicate that you would like to speak or share your verbal comment.

454

01:38:44.070 --> 01:38:46.950

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If you're joining us by phone, you can dial star-nine.

455

01:42:40.620 --> 01:42:45.870

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue remains open. The panel will be available

456

01:42:49.320 --> 01:42:51.630

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): for anyone who signs up before 7:30

457

01:42:53.370 --> 01:42:55.440

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): and wishes to deliver a comment.

458

01:42:57.210 --> 01:43:03.810

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You can use the Raise Hand function at the bottom of your screen, or if you're on the phone, please dial star-nine to indicate that you would like to speak.

459

01:43:12.270 --> 01:43:21.360

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next speaker is Frederick Ames. Frederick, you may unmute and speak when you're ready. Please remember to say and spell your first and last name. Thank you.

460

01:43:22.020 --> 01:43:24.840

Frederick L. Ames: Yes, and I apologize, I will do it this time.

461

01:43:26.400 --> 01:43:37.140

Frederick L. Ames: I guess that I'm nervous speaking in these things. So, first name is Frederick, F-R-E-D-E-R-I-C-K, and the last name is spelled A-M-E-S.

462

01:43:38.760 --> 01:43:42.090

Frederick L. Ames: I am concerned, obviously, about the monument and

463

01:43:43.890 --> 01:43:48.870

Frederick L. Ames: I hate to almost sort of feel like I'm the only one out there who, who seems to say anything about it.

464

01:43:50.070 --> 01:43:57.540

Frederick L. Ames: I know that's not true. The monument is really a part of that environment and again, as I wrote to the

465

01:43:58.770 --> 01:44:15.120

Frederick L. Ames: Laramie Boomerang, that is the whole part of the design is to blend in with the environment, to celebrate it, to become part of it, which is one of the issues that really is underlying this discussion tonight. So again, I know

466

01:44:16.560 --> 01:44:23.160

Frederick L. Ames: my piece of the puzzle seems sort of an ephemeral, but I believe it really has tremendous value

467

01:44:24.180 --> 01:44:26.370

Frederick L. Ames: to the country and our culture. Thank you.

468

01:44:31.200 --> 01:44:32.700

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you for your comment, Frederick.

469

01:44:36.600 --> 01:44:42.450

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment is coming from Brett Wadsworth. Brett, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

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01:44:45.720 --> 01:44:46.170

Brett Wadsworth: Thank you.

471

01:44:46.500 --> 01:44:57.720

Brett Wadsworth: Brett Wadsworth, B-R-E-T-T, last name W-A-D-S-W-O-R-T-H. I could not let that last comment, by Mr. Frederick, to go stand alone.

472

01:44:58.350 --> 01:45:12.960

Brett Wadsworth: He is not alone on this either. This country is pretty special. The comments from the folks earlier who talked about how sensitive this environment is? I feel their pain, exactly. I have a house in the Vedauwoo area.

473

01:45:14.460 --> 01:45:30.900

Brett Wadsworth: After construction, I regret the fact that the prairie grass does not wish to grow back and the fact that this decomposed granite in this area, with the winds, anything small and light and fine will not catch and take hold and

474

01:45:32.190 --> 01:45:41.190

Brett Wadsworth: return for eons, I'm afraid. Except, of course, for cheatgrass and the things that we don't want, the invasive species that seem to grow up anywhere.

475

01:45:42.150 --> 01:45:53.160

Brett Wadsworth: Something of this magnitude, an industrial power facility, cannot just be planted in an area like this without there being untold impacts to the environment,

476

01:45:54.030 --> 01:46:11.670

Brett Wadsworth: to the views, to property values, to the large game, to the small game, to the avians, to the water. Everything about this country will be forever changed, at least as far as I'm concerned. The life cycle of this facility, 30-some years,

477

01:46:12.780 --> 01:46:21.000

Brett Wadsworth: that's going to outlast me, I expect, and the footprint from that, because of the sensitivity of terrain and the environment, appear

478

01:46:21.450 --> 01:46:34.950

Brett Wadsworth: even when those things are ripped out of the ground and deposited in landfills in Casper or wherever it may be. This country will continue to suffer the damage and the repercussions for

479

01:46:36.060 --> 01:46:43.830

Brett Wadsworth: well outside the life spans of any of us sitting here in this meeting, right now. All of us will be well gone and our children will be gone too,

480

01:46:44.310 --> 01:46:55.230

Brett Wadsworth: before the effects of this thing are past. And to truly know what's going to be the life cycle costs on the 1,900 raptors, as the gentleman earlier commented,

481

01:46:55.680 --> 01:47:06.630

Brett Wadsworth: that are killed annually at a similar wind farm in California, and all the thousands upon thousands of their progeny, which will never be born, or the ones that are

482

01:47:07.500 --> 01:47:20.400

Brett Wadsworth: born that will also be killed, is mind boggling. The footprint that this has, and the impact it will have for all of us, and for what is a very beautiful, special, spectacular piece of country here in

483

01:47:21.300 --> 01:47:30.510

Brett Wadsworth: Wyoming. And I grieve for what is going to happen, should this be approved, and I thank you very much for the opportunity.

484

01:47:34.470 --> 01:47:35.820

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Brett, for your comment.

485

01:47:40.950 --> 01:47:45.930

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from Paul Montoya. Paul, you may unmute and begin when you're ready.

486

01:47:49.050 --> 01:47:51.420

Paul Montoya: Thank you, Sarah. I just wanted to take a moment

487

01:47:51.870 --> 01:47:54.480

Paul Montoya: to maybe comment on—

488

01:47:55.770 --> 01:48:10.380

Paul Montoya: I think Fred Ames was a little disturbed by the fact that more people were commenting about Ames Monument, which is directly tied to his family. And I appreciate him calling in. I think a lot of the reason that people have not

489

01:48:12.360 --> 01:48:21.240

Paul Montoya: taken part in this—and I know Mr. Wieringa knows that there's a large outcry, because he was at the original scoping meeting about this Project.

490

01:48:22.320 --> 01:48:33.270

Paul Montoya: But I think a lot of people may not be participating in public meeting because of two reasons. I think one is that there's not a public meeting. And I understand your position for not holding a public meeting,

491

01:48:34.410 --> 01:48:44.250

Paul Montoya: a live public meeting. And I think some people are discouraged by that. I think the other one is the question that was addressed yesterday

492

01:48:44.940 --> 01:48:54.150

Paul Montoya: when I asked has WAPA ever denied an interconnection request, and the answer was the WAPA.

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01:48:54.510 --> 01:49:06.600

Paul Montoya: has not, to our knowledge, denied an interconnection request at the environmental stage. I think a lot of people feel that maybe the environmental stage of

494

01:49:07.230 --> 01:49:19.260

Paul Montoya: this Project is maybe just for show, and basically to demonstrate that you've done your due diligence to the public, but really has no real teeth. And I think a lot of people are disappointed by that.

495

01:49:19.680 --> 01:49:29.520

Paul Montoya: I do appreciate all you take, all you folks taking the time to listen to the comments and I know it's gonna be pretty boring just sitting there waiting 'till 7:30 to hit,

496

01:49:30.720 --> 01:49:40.140

Paul Montoya: but I do appreciate that you're taking the time to listen. I hope it has some impact. I'd love for this Project be the first to be denied a connection

497

01:49:40.710 --> 01:49:50.280

Paul Montoya: based on the findings of your environmental study, but I think a lot of people aren't really holding a lot of hope. So thank you very much for your time tonight.

498

01:49:56.430 --> 01:49:57.780

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Paul, for your comment.

499

01:50:06.900 --> 01:50:18.750

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that the queue remains open. You may use the Raise Hand function, or if you're joining us by telephone, please dial star-nine to indicate that you would like to share a comment.

500

01:50:54.810 --> 01:50:56.280

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Okay, it looks like we have one more

501

01:50:57.570 --> 01:50:58.380

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): question,

502

01:50:59.640 --> 01:51:10.050

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): and our response is ready. So this question also came from a commenter. The question was: Are there bigger turbines noisier than the smaller turbines?

503

01:51:11.550 --> 01:51:12.720

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And the panel's response:

504

01:51:14.130 --> 01:51:23.730

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Larger turbines emit slightly less sound than smaller turbines. This is partially because the blades of the larger turbines rotate more slowly than smaller turbines.

505

01:51:24.690 --> 01:51:33.390

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The acoustic report for the draft EIS modeled the “noisiest” turbine option out of the full range of turbine options being considered by the applicant.

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01:51:34.530 --> 01:51:40.140

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): This “noisiest” turbine is, in fact, also the smallest turbine model out of the options considered.

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01:52:56.790 --> 01:52:57.840

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder

508

01:52:59.190 --> 01:53:06.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): that the email address, web address for the online form, and mailing address are displayed on the screen.

509

01:53:07.650 --> 01:53:15.990

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): This information is also available on the Project website. Written comments submitted electronically via the online form or email are preferred.

510

01:53:16.470 --> 01:53:28.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): WAPA will accept public input at any time during the NEPA process; however, for your comments to be fully considered when the draft EIS is revised, they must be submitted by Monday, May 17, 2021.

511

01:53:32.310 --> 01:53:38.970

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Written comments are preferred and you're encouraged to send your comments by email or use the online form provided on the Project website.

,512

01:53:40.320 --> 01:53:53.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): While WAPA can receive comments through the mail, please note that access to WAPA's Headquarters Office is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so written comments mailed to the WAPA Headquarters Office may be delayed and reaching the Project Team.

513

01:53:54.960 --> 01:54:05.970

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The recording of this hearing and the hearing transcripts will be posted on the Project website following the hearing. In addition, both the questions and responses will also be posted on the Project website following the hearing.

514

01:54:28.530 --> 01:54:33.510

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from Karen Schertz. Karen, you can unmute and begin when you're ready.

515

01:54:37.980 --> 01:54:39.900

Leland Schertz: Hi, this is Leland Schertz,

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01:54:39.930 --> 01:54:53.730

Leland Schertz: Karen's husband. Name is L-E-L-A-N-D S-C-H-E-R-T-Z. And I have one simple question: If the demand for all this wind turbine energy is such an in-demand right now,

517

01:54:54.630 --> 01:55:06.840

Leland Schertz: why is it that every time you go from here to Cheyenne, at the new Project at Round Top, there's a percentage of the windmills that are not running?

518

01:55:07.740 --> 01:55:16.440

Leland Schertz: If there's such a demand for it, how come they aren't running at full speed? Or if they are running, they're running so slow, that you can barely see a move.

519

01:55:17.580 --> 01:55:18.480

Leland Schertz: Thanks for your time.

520

01:55:22.800 --> 01:55:24.270

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Leland, for your question.

521

02:00:00.150 --> 02:00:11.250

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that there's about 30 minutes left to sign up to speak. You can sign up by clicking the Raise Hand button at the bottom of your screen, or if you're joining us by phone, you can dial star-nine.

522

02:09:55.980 --> 02:10:01.920

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from Frederick Ames. Frederick, you can unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

523

02:10:04.950 --> 02:10:09.240

Frederick L. Ames: Thank you, I just have a question: Am I the only one out here?

524

02:10:17.430 --> 02:10:19.650

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Frederick, thanks for your question.

525

02:10:20.940 --> 02:10:23.610

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): It looks like there are approximately 14 attendees

526

02:10:24.780 --> 02:10:26.490

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): present on the webinar, at this time.

527

02:10:27.330 --> 02:10:27.780

Frederick L. Ames: Thank you.

528

02:10:28.470 --> 02:10:29.220

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): You're welcome.

529

02:10:30.720 --> 02:10:32.790

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Our next comment comes from Barb Smith.

530

02:10:33.510 --> 02:10:37.830

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Barb, you may unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

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02:10:41.910 --> 02:10:48.000

Barb Smith: Hi, my name is Barb Smith, B-A-R-B S-M-I-T-H.

532

02:10:49.830 --> 02:11:03.660

Barb Smith: We have owned land, a fourth a mile from Ames for 20 years because of the views. We have constructed a home there now. Ames and the valley are our viewscape.

533

02:11:04.890 --> 02:11:13.440

Barb Smith: We specifically have lots of windows because of the view from our property. We look straight at Ames Monument.

534

02:11:14.310 --> 02:11:33.810

Barb Smith: Ames Monument is one of the very few national monuments in Wyoming and hundreds of visitors go there. We can see them drive there, and then we can see them leave again. We've also visited with them if we've gone up to the monument and to look for a visit.

535

02:11:35.340 --> 02:11:53.160

Barb Smith: We consider it a treasure to look at and that's what we see out our front windows. Also, there's a trail across our property that was there when we purchased it in 1999. The trail has never re-foliaged itself, even though it is never driven on.

536

02:11:54.810 --> 02:11:59.070

Barb Smith: The night skies and views, Ames, are why we own there.

537

02:12:00.270 --> 02:12:05.490

Barb Smith: It is a hostile climate, but you ignore that for the views, the wildlife.

538

02:12:06.570 --> 02:12:09.990

Barb Smith: If you take that away, there's no reason to own there.

539

02:12:11.130 --> 02:12:11.610

Barb Smith: Thank you.

540

02:12:15.690 --> 02:12:16.020

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you

541

02:12:16.290 --> 02:12:17.100

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): for your comment.

542

02:12:25.260 --> 02:12:28.410

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): So just a reminder that there's about 15 minutes left

543

02:12:29.670 --> 02:12:31.650

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): to sign up in the speaker queue.

544

02:12:34.020 --> 02:12:41.250

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): At 7:30, we will stop taking signups. If you wish to deliver a comment during this public hearing, please join the queue.

545

02:13:03.120 --> 02:13:06.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): And I will go ahead and answer another question that was

546

02:13:07.020 --> 02:13:09.090

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): offered by one of our commenters tonight.

547

02:13:10.140 --> 02:13:11.220

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The question was:

548

02:13:13.260 --> 02:13:25.590

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): If there is such a demand for this Project, why are the windmills in the Round Top Project not running or running slowly? If there is a demand for wind energy, why isn't that Project running at full capacity?

549

02:13:28.050 --> 02:13:29.190

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The panel's response:

550

02:13:30.690 --> 02:13:39.810

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We believe you are referring to the Roundhouse Wind Project. We are not involved with that project or familiar with its operational parameters; however,

551

02:13:40.290 --> 02:13:53.070

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): wind turbines may spin slowly or be periodically curtailed for various reasons, including during certain environmental or meteorological conditions and for performance of routine operations and maintenance.

552

02:25:19.320 --> 02:25:22.110

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Just a reminder that we have about 5 minutes left

553

02:25:24.750 --> 02:25:27.630

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): for the queue to be open. If you wish to speak,

554

02:25:28.680 --> 02:25:38.880

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): please press the Raise Hand button at the bottom of your screen, or if you're joining us by telephone, dial star-nine to indicate that you'd like to deliver a comment.

555

02:27:39.750 --> 02:27:42.090

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Next comment comes from Frederick Ames.

556

02:27:43.380 --> 02:27:46.470

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Frederick, you may unmute and begin speaking when you're ready.

557

02:27:49.140 --> 02:27:49.830

Frederick L. Ames: Oh, thank you.

558

02:27:50.820 --> 02:27:53.940

Frederick L. Ames: I just want to make a comment and thank those who spoke up

559

02:27:55.170 --> 02:28:00.810

Frederick L. Ames: and said those kinds of things about the Ames Monument. I know it's out there. I'm sorry if my

560

02:28:02.010 --> 02:28:07.260

Frederick L. Ames: first comment sounded like nobody, you know, is really interested in it, but that's obviously not the case.

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02:28:08.550 --> 02:28:17.610

Frederick L. Ames: I have learned a lot this evening about the environmental situation and the damages that can occur that way. It was good. I've been a bit, somewhat focused on one area.

562

02:28:18.300 --> 02:28:29.070

Frederick L. Ames: It's good to learn about the other concerns to and to hear the responses from the developers and thank you for allowing us to do this.

563

02:28:33.690 --> 02:28:35.070

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Thank you, Frederick, for your comment.

564

02:28:46.560 --> 02:28:49.140

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): About 2 minutes left to sign up to speak.

565

02:28:50.490 --> 02:28:52.800

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Once again, you can use the Raise Hand button.

566

02:28:54.120 --> 02:28:59.160

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Or if you're joining us by phone, dial star-nine to indicate that you'd like to deliver a comment.

567

02:29:57.360 --> 02:29:59.640

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): That concludes our

568

02:30:01.470 --> 02:30:04.230

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): public, the public hearing portion of this meeting.

569

02:30:06.060 --> 02:30:12.000

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): We have, I think, answered all of the questions that were submitted by commenters or through the Q&A.

570

02:30:13.290 --> 02:30:25.590

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): On behalf of Western Area Power Administration, I want to thank you all for participating in this public hearing. Comments offered during this hearing will be considered, along with written comments, as the draft EIS is revised.

571

02:30:26.760 --> 02:30:35.580

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): The email address, web address for the online form, and mailing address are displayed on the screen. This information is also available on the Project website.

572

02:30:36.630 --> 02:30:53.850

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Written comments submitted electronically by the online form or email are preferred. WAPA will accept public input at any time during the NEPA process; however, for your comments to be fully considered when the draft EIS is revised, they must be submitted by Monday, May 17, 2021.

573

02:30:55.590 --> 02:31:02.490

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): Written comments are preferred, and you are encouraged to send your comments by email or use the online forum provided on the Project website.

574

02:31:04.710 --> 02:31:18.930

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): While WAPA can receive questions—comments through the mail, please note that access to WAPA's Headquarters Office is limited because of the COVID-19 pandemic, so written comments mailed to the WAPA Headquarters Office may be delayed and reaching the Project Team.

575

02:31:20.040 --> 02:31:30.990

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): A recording of this hearing and the hearing transcripts will be posted on the Project website, following the meeting. In addition, both the questions and responses will be posted on the Project website following the hearing.

576

02:31:32.310 --> 02:31:36.300

Sarah Lupis (SWCA): This concludes today's hearing. Thank you again for your participation.