



Oregon

Kate Brown, Governor



550 Capitol St. NE
Salem, OR 97301
Phone: 503-378-4040
Toll Free: 1-800-221-8035
FAX: 503-373-7806
www.oregon.gov/energy

To: Energy Facility Siting Council

From: Sarah Esterson, Senior Siting Analyst

Date: July 10, 2020

Subject: Agenda Item C (Action Item):
Staff Report on Request to Amend the Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility II
Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan for the July 23-24, 2020 EFSC Meeting

Attachments: Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan
(Placeholder)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Oregon Department of Energy (Department) recommends the Energy Facility Siting Council (Council) approve the request by Wheatridge Wind Energy II, LLC (certificate holder) to amend the Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (WMMP) for the Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility II site certificate.

BACKGROUND

Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility II is an approved 550 megawatt (MW) wind and solar energy generation facility with 80 wind turbines (200 MW) currently under construction in Morrow County. Commercial operation of the wind facility components is anticipated in October 2020; the construction commencement deadline for solar facility components is November 22, 2022.

The facility originally received approval from the Council in April 2017 for a site certificate for a 500 MW wind energy facility referred to as the Wheatridge Wind Energy Facility. Subsequent to the April 2017 site certificate issuance, the certificate holder received Council approval of four site certificate amendments, where site certificate amendment 5 authorized allocation of previously approved facility components into two original site certificates for facilities referred to as WREFII and Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facility I (WREFI, 100 MW wind facility).

PROPOSED MITIGATION PLAN AMENDMENTS

Under the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Standard (OAR 345-022-0060), Council imposed Fish and Wildlife Habitat Condition 4 (PRE-FW-02) requiring that, during facility operation, the certificate holder implement a Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (WMMP). One of the WMMP components is a Post-Construction Fatality Monitoring Program (PCFM), where the objective is

to determine whether wind turbine operation results in significant fatality of bird and bat species. The WMMP PCFM establishes protocol for removal trials, searcher efficiency trials, fatality searches, and the statistical analysis of an ODFW-approved model (“Shoenfeld Estimator”). The protocols and statistical analysis represent current standard practice for EFSC-wind facilities.

The certificate holder requests approval to amend the WMMP PCFM protocols and statistical analysis to reflect updates in industry standards and practices. In summary, the changes to the PCFM would result in the following:

- Updated terminology to reflect current industry standard descriptions of post construction monitoring methods;
- More detail on the standardized carcass search methods, such as defining the two target size classes and the search plots, search intervals, and search strategy proposed for each of those target size classes;
- Updating searcher efficiency trial language to reflect the two target size classes being studied and update number of carcasses placed for each size class;
- Updating incidental finds language to clarify how those finds would be incorporated into fatality rates;
- Updating the fatality estimator from Shoenfeld to the United States Geological Survey’s Generalized Mortality Estimator (GenEst) tool

The Department, in consultation with Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) Regional Biologist Steve Cherry and Energy Coordinator Sarah Reif, are reviewing the proposed changes, which are considered to represent improved methods for more accurate data collection and fatality risk assessment. ODFW continues to review the proposed changes and has requested that the certificate holder provide additional scientific documentation to support review of the method changes. Based on review of information provided to date, the Department anticipates receipt of ODFW concurrence on the requested WMMP amendment in July 2020, before the July 23-24, 2020 Council meeting. The Department will provide Council with additional information including ODFW’s assessment of the request prior to the Council meeting in a supplemental package.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (Placeholder)