



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 Policy Advisor

Date: April 9, 2021

Subject: Agenda Item D (Action Item):
Golden Hills Wind Project – Request to Amend Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan for the April 22-23, 2021 EFSC Meeting

Attachments: Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The Oregon Department of Energy (Department) recommends the Energy Facility Siting Council (Council) approve the request by Golden Hills Wind Farm LLC (certificate holder) to amend the Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan (WMMP) of the Golden Hills Wind Project site certificate.

BACKGROUND

The Department received a request to amend the WMMP for the Golden Hills Wind Project in March 2021. Golden Hills Wind Project is an approved 400 megawatt (MW) wind facility in Sherman County. The facility is currently under construction, where based on final design with 51 wind turbines, will be a 200 MW facility.

PROPOSED MITIGATION PLAN AMENDMENTS

Under the Fish and Wildlife Habitat Standard (OAR 345-022-0060), Council imposed Condition OPR-FW-01 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:

- Remove reference to bird handling
- Increase search frequency from 16 to 24 per year
- Modify consecutive survey years from Year 1 and Year 5, to Years 1 and 2
- Add option to use road and pad survey plots
- Updating the fatality estimator from Shoenfeld to the United States Geological Survey's Generalized Mortality Estimator (GenEst) tool.

The proposed changes are substantively the same as the changes reviewed by the Department, in consultation with ODFW Regional Biologist Steve Cherry and Energy Coordinator Sarah Reif, for the Wheatridge Renewable Energy Facilities I and II, as approved by Council in October 2020. In particular, ODFW and the Department previously reviewed proposed changes in PCFM search interval and search plot size and location; and use of the GenEst tool.

The Department, ODFW and certificate holder conducted a conference call on March 18, 2021 to discuss the details of the proposed changes, as presented in red-line in Attachment 1. Based on review and consultation with ODFW, the Department recommends Council approve the WMMP amendment for the Golden Hills Wind Project and determine that the proposed amendments represent improvements in data collection and analytical evaluation of potential fatality impacts from wind turbine operation to bird and bat species. The Department has requested written concurrence from ODFW, to be further discussed at the April 23, 2021 Council meeting.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: Draft Amended Wildlife Monitoring and Mitigation Plan