

**PUBLIC SCOPING STATEMENT
CHOKECHERRY AND SIERRA MADRE WIND ENERGY PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
RAWLINS FIELD OFFICE**

DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT

Power Company of Wyoming, LLC, filed applications for a wind energy project located within the jurisdictional boundary of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Rawlins Field Office. The project is known as the Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project. The wind energy project area comprises approximately 98,500 acres located within Townships 19 and 20 North, Ranges 85 through 87 West for the Chokecherry area, and Townships 16 through 18 North, Ranges 87 through 89 West for the Sierra Madre area. The project occurs in a “checker board” land ownership pattern area with approximately half of the land being BLM public land, and approximately half being private and State of Wyoming ownership.

The proposed 2,000 megawatts (MW) of production will be provided by approximately 675, 2-MW turbines proposed to be constructed in the Chokecherry area portion of the project, and approximately 325, 2-MW turbines proposed to be constructed in the Sierra Madre portion of the project area. Other associated facilities required by the project will include access roads, underground electric gathering lines, an overhead electric transmission line, and electric substations to interconnect the generated power to the National electric grid. The project will utilize newly constructed roads in addition to existing roads.

The project will require approximately two to three years for construction, with an in-service target date of late-2012. The project will operate continuously, except for maintenance shutdowns on individual wind turbine generators, with a projected 30 year life.

RELATIONSHIP TO EXISTING PLANS AND DOCUMENTS

Great Divide Resource Management Plan - The Great Divide Resource Management Plan (GDRMP) (November 8, 1990) provides management direction for resources contained within the Rawlins Field Office area. Under the BLM Lands Program, public lands are available for use by utility and transportation systems while supporting the goals and objectives of other resource programs (BLM 1990). The GDRMP is currently being revised under the title of Rawlins Resource Management Plan. The Final EIS for the Rawlins RMP was released in January 2008. A decision for the Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy EIS will not be made nor implemented until after a Record of Decision is issued for the Rawlins RMP FEIS. The revised Rawlins RMP states, “Proposals for location of wind energy development would be considered on a case-by-case basis and subject to a site-specific NEPA analysis. Areas with important or sensitive resource values would be excluded or avoided” (BLM 2008). In the proposed plan, the potential exists for wind energy development to not be in conformance with VRM Class III. Therefore, the need for a land use plan amendment to modify a visual resource management class is being evaluated.

BLM Record of Decision and Final Programmatic EIS for Wind Energy Development - The EIS will incorporate/tier from the Record of Decision and Final Programmatic EIS for Wind Energy Development on BLM Administered Lands in the Western United States. (BLM 2005)

Use Authorizations - Use authorizations (i.e., rights-of-way) for the wind project area, and off-project access roads and transmission lines will be processed in accordance with the Federal Land Policy Management Act, Title V (43 U.S.C.1761), regulations at 43 CFR § 2800, and the BLM Wind Energy Policy.

NATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT

On reviewing the Power Company of Wyoming, LLC, proposal, the BLM has determined an EIS will be prepared pursuant to Section 102 (2)(C) of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969. The EIS will address the proposed action and a range of reasonable alternatives including a no action alternative. The EIS will analyze the impacts of issuing rights-of-way for the wind energy project and ancillary facilities (consisting of access roads, electric power gathering cables, an electric transmission line, and electric substations).

One element of NEPA is scoping. Scoping activities are conducted prior to the preparation of an EIS to provide the following:

- determination of reasonable development alternatives to be considered in the document
- identification of environmental and socioeconomic issues of concern related to the proposed project
- determination of the depth and range of analyses for issues addressed in the document

This scoping statement has been prepared to enable government agencies, the general public, and other interested parties to participate in, and contribute to, the analysis process. Public input is important in establishing the scope of analysis for any NEPA document, and the BLM encourages public participation.

IDENTIFIED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The following issues and concerns have been identified to-date. This list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather to serve as a starting point for public input. Once all issues and concerns have been gathered through scoping and BLM consideration of the project, corresponding resource disciplines will be identified to conduct analysis for individual issues and concerns.

- potential impacts to cultural and historical resources
- potential effects upon wildlife and their habitats
- potential impacts to sensitive soils
- potential impacts to ground water resources
- potential visual impacts and conformance with existing VRM classes
- potential impacts from emissions and dust resulting from construction activities
- potential conflicts between development activities and recreational activities
- social and economic impacts to local communities
- reclamation of disturbed areas and control of nonnative plants

- impacts of increased traffic and associated effects upon county, state, and BLM roads and highways
- cumulative effects of the wind development activities when combined with other ongoing and proposed developments on lands in jurisdiction of the BLM Rawlins Field Office

INTERDISCIPLINARY TEAM

Based upon current understanding of issues, concerns, and opportunities, an interdisciplinary team made up of the following resource specialists within the BLM Wyoming State Office and the Rawlins Field Office has been identified.

- Realty Specialist
- NEPA Specialist
- Archaeologist
- Wildlife Biologist
- Hydrologist
- Recreation Planner and Visual Resource Specialist
- Engineer
- Soils Scientist
- Geologist
- Range Management Specialist
- Fisheries Biologist
- Natural Resource Specialist (Oil and Gas)
- Natural Resource Specialist (Reclamation)
- Air Specialist

TIMING NEEDS AND REQUIREMENTS

Government agencies, the public, and other interested parties are encouraged to participate throughout the environmental analysis process to help in identifying alternatives to be considered, issues or concerns that should be assessed, mitigation opportunities, and any other comments or ideas to help ensure that the analysis process is comprehensive. After a 45-day scoping period is completed, and the Draft EIS is prepared, it will be released to the public for review and comment.

Please submit your scoping comments to:

Heather Nino, Realty Specialist
Bureau of Land Management
Rawlins Field Office
1300 North Third Street
Rawlins WY 82301

E-mail: WYMail_PCW_Windfarm@blm.gov

Please refer to the “Chokecherry and Sierra Madre Wind Energy Project” in your response.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

Great Divide Resource Area Record of Decision and Approved Resource Management Plan. (1990) Prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, Rawlins, Wyoming.

Record of Decision and Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement for Wind Energy Development on BLM Administered Lands in the Western United States. (2005) Prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management.

Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement for Public Lands Administered by the Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, Wyoming. (2008) Prepared by the U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management, Rawlins Field Office, Rawlins, Wyoming.

