Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife News

July 8, 2014

Featured...

Department of Energy, Wind and Water Power Technologies Office: Wind Energy Bat and Eagle Impact Minimization Technologies and Field Testing Opportunities. The U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (EERE) invites public comment on its Request for Information (RFI) regarding a potential funding opportunity to advance the readiness of bat and eagle impact minimization technologies through investments in technology development and field testing.

In its RFI, EERE requests comments, information, and recommendations on the current state of wildlife impact minimization technologies, conditions under which technology vendors or developers would consider participating in a demonstration and validation campaign, and the conditions under which wind farm owner/operators would consider participating in a campaign to demonstrate, field-test, and validate such technologies. Additionally, EERE seeks input on a proposed framework for funding the advancement of wildlife impact minimization technologies aimed at reducing impacts to bats, eagles and other wildlife of concern, and on how to prioritize funding for research within this framework. The RFI is available at: https://eere-exchange.energy.gov/.

Eagle Scoping Public Input Process. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) is analyzing various aspects of bald and golden eagle management as part of its responsibility under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Public input is an important part of this process. The NEPA analysis will evaluate the environmental effects of a range of alternatives for eagle management, including possible changes to permit regulations. The purpose of the public scoping process with regard to NEPA is to determine relevant issues that could influence the scope of the analysis, including alternatives, and guide the process for developing an environmental assessment (EA) or environmental impact statement (EIS) and related compliance efforts. (http://eaglescoping.org/).

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Extends Decision Deadline for Final ESA Listing Decision on the Northern Long-eared Bat as Endangered. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service will extend for six months the deadline on its decision whether to list the northern long-eared bat as endangered under the Endangered Species Act (ESA), providing additional time to resolve questions received during the public comment period regarding the species’ population and white-nose syndrome, a disease that has killed millions of bats and poses the greatest threat to this species. (http://www.fws.gov/midwest/endangered/mammals/nlba/BulletinNLEBexten24June2014.html).
Around Nebraska…


Turbines near Broken Bow bring benefits — but not to neighbors dealing with their noise, size, ‘strobe effect’. “No matter which way you look, you see them,” Dave Stunkel said, looking out his window. “And no matter which way the wind blows, I get the noise.” But there are no turbines on the Stunkels’ land. So unlike the property owners, they are not compensated for the inconvenience. They do not receive a royalty check each February. (http://www.omaha.com/money/turbines-near-broken-bow-bring-benefits-but-not-to-neighbors/article_dbc6da42-5c03-51ce-a936-39b0c0a2f0d1.html).

Invenergy Wind dedicates Prairie Breeze wind farm. A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held Wednesday to dedicate Prairie Breeze, a 200-megawatt wind farm near Elgin in northeast Nebraska. Operated by Invenergy Wind, headquartered in Chicago, Prairie Breeze is a 118-turbine project, stretching over 26,000 acres in Antelope, Boone and Madison counties. (http://journalstar.com/business/local/invenergy-wind-dedicates-prairie-breeze-wind-farm/article_e4f08721-b5d3-5f95-89ad-efe0d5f8aba.html).

Grande Prairie Wind Farm, O’Neill, NE Draft EIS. The Western Area Power Administration (Western), an agency of the Department of Energy (DOE), has prepared a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the proposed interconnection of the Grande Prairie Wind Farm (Project) in Holt County, near the city of O’Neill, Nebraska. Grande Prairie Wind, LLC (Grande Prairie), a subsidiary of Midwest Wind Energy Development Group, LLC, has applied to Western to interconnect their proposed Project to Western’s power transmission system.

DATES: The public comment period closes on August 4, 2014. A public hearing will be held on July 1, 2014 from 5:00-8:00 PM CDT.

ADDRESSES: A public hearing will be held at the O’Neill Community Center, 501 South 4th Street, O’Neill, NE 68763. Written comments on the draft EIS should be addressed to Mr. Rod O’Sullivan, Document Manager, Western Area Power Administration, P.O. Box 281213, Lakewood, CO 80228-8213 or e-mail at grandeprairie@wapa.gov. (https://www.wapa.gov/ugp/Environment/GrandePrairie.htm).

7th Annual Nebraska Wind & Solar Conference & Exhibition: Turning Challenges into Nebraska Opportunities will be on October 29th and 30th in LaVista, Nebraska. There are sponsor and exhibitor opportunities at varying price levels. If you have presentation ideas, you can submit them to: admin@nebraskawindconference.com. (http://nebraskawindandsolarconference.com/).

Around the Nation & World…

Wind and Wildlife

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Announces First Eagle Take Permit for Wind Farm. On June 27, 2014, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) announced the availability of a special take permit for golden eagles for the Shiloh IV Wind Project in Solano County, California, 60 miles east of San Francisco. The first such permit to be issued in the nation to a wind farm, the permit allows up to five golden eagles to be accidentally killed, harmed or disturbed over five years in exchange for steps to prevent injuries or
deaths to eagles from electrocution by retrofitting power poles and other measures.  (http://www.jdsupra.com/legalnews/us-fish-and-wildlife-service-announces-18882/).

Golden Eagles; Programmatic Take Permit Decision; Finding of No Significant Impact of Final Environmental Assessment; Shiloh IV Wind Project, Solano County, California.  The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announces the availability of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and final Environmental Assessment (FEA) under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) for the issuance of a take permit for golden eagles pursuant to the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (Eagle Act), in association with the operation of the Shiloh IV Wind Project in Solano County, California. (https://www.federalregister.gov/articles/2014/06/27/2014-14953/golden-eagles-programmatic-take-permit-decision-finding-of-no-significant-impact-of-final).

Assessing Risk to Birds from Industrial Wind Energy Development via Paired Resource Selection Models, Tricia A. Miller et al 2014, Conservation Biology. When wildlife habitat overlaps with industrial development animals may be harmed. Because wildlife and people select resources to maximize biological fitness and economic return, respectively, we estimated risk, the probability of eagles encountering and being affected by turbines, by overlaying models of resource selection for each entity. Risk within individual facilities was extremely variable. Our results provide a mechanism for relocating high-risk turbines, and they show the feasibility of this novel and highly adaptable framework for managing risk of harm to wildlife from industrial development.  (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12227/abstract).

NEPA/BGEPA: Fish and Wildlife Service May Overhaul Rule Permitting Incidental Take of Eagles.  Just as the United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) issues its first permit under the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act (BGEPA) authorizing a wind energy project to “take” golden eagles over the next five years, the agency also has announced that it intends to conduct a comprehensive review of its eagle permitting program under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).  (http://www.martenlaw.com/newsletter/20140701-incidental-take-rule-overhaul).

Wildlife officials want to talk about eagle permits.  The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service announced it will engage in public comment as it works to revise a rule governing how permits are issued for wind turbine development. The service released an evaluation of its new eagle management objectives to the Federal Register pertaining to the building and permitting of wind turbine farms.  (http://www.newspressnow.com/sports/outdoors/article_9f5a0239-a1b9-5935-81cf-d1d5519575a1.html).

Eagles and Wind Turbines.  Regarding a recent entry in The Corner, the wind-energy industry is actually held to a higher standard when it comes to wildlife impacts than any other energy form or human activity. In fact, studies have shown that wind energy has the lowest life-cycle environmental impacts of any source of utility-scale electricity generation, and we proudly operate under a longstanding legacy of care for all wildlife, including eagles.  (http://www.nationalreview.com/article/382064/eagles-and-wind-turbines-letters).

Eagles killed by Palm Springs windmills raise concerns.  When eagles fly over San Gorgonio Pass, they confront a barrage of deadly obstacles among the whirring blades of windmills. It's unclear how many birds are killed, but federal officials say the wind turbines here and at other wind farms are taking a significant toll.  (http://www.desertsun.com/story/news/environment/2014/07/03/palm-springs-bald-eagles-dying-windmills/12205617/).

Smart Renewable Energy on Public Lands.  Earlier this month, the EPA issued guidelines which would reduce coal generated power in each state by 6 percent over the next 15 years. This would give states the opportunity to reduce carbon emission amounts by choosing from other types of energy such as natural gas or renewable resources to improve their energy efficiency. In Montana, wind energy is set to play a role in achieving these new standards. Wind energy production has steadily grown in Montana.
over the last decade. A recently published economic report says Montana will support roughly 4,000 renewable energy jobs in the next 20 years. (http://blog.nwf.org/2014/07/smart-renewable-energy-on-public-lands/).

**Wildlife**

**Partners in the Sky: Aviation and Aerospace Industry Leaders Join the Smithsonian in Worldwide Conservation Efforts.** Unlocking the mysteries of animal movement through precision, near real-time tracking can solve major conservation challenges and transform wildlife science worldwide. Aviation and aerospace companies are volunteering their resources to help track the movement of thousands of animals, using technologies and programs similar to those they use every day—whether in satellite navigation, communication, and surveillance, or in high-fidelity tracking. (http://nationalzoo.si.edu/SCBI/PartnersInTheSky/).

**Ultraviolet Vision and Avoidance of Power Lines in Birds and Mammals,** Nicholas Tyler et al 2014, Conservation Biology. The avoidance by mammals and ground-nesting birds of habitat up to several kilometers from high-voltage power lines is a major consequence of infrastructure development in remote areas, but the behavior is perplexing because suspended cables are neither an impenetrable physical barrier nor associated with human traffic. Moreover, avoidance may persist >3 decades after construction, suggesting behavioral reinforcement. Integration of new information on visual function with the characteristics of power line function provides compelling evidence that avoidance may be linked with the ability of animals to detect ultraviolet light (UV). (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/cobi.12262/abstract).

**New Hope for Struggling Night Creature.** Little brown bats, once the state’s most numerous species, seem to have stopped dying off. Researchers caution the bit of positive news about New York’s little brown bat doesn’t mean the threat of white-nose syndrome has ended. Other species of bats in New York also continue to die off. The syndrome has killed off about 98% of the northern long-eared bat, according to state researchers. (http://online.wsj.com/articles/hopeful-sign-for-little-brown-bats-1404786289).

**Senate majority could rest on sage grouse.** An obscure, chicken-sized bird best known for its mating dance could help determine whether Democrats or Republicans control the U.S. Senate in November. The federal government is considering listing the greater sage grouse as an endangered species next year. Doing so could limit development, energy exploration, hunting and ranching on the 165 million acres of the bird’s habitat across 11 Western states. (http://www.miamiherald.com/2014/07/05/4219510/bird-known-for-mating-dance-may.html).

**Wind**

**Harvard Researchers Are 3-D Printing Fake Balsa Wood For Next-Generation Wind Turbines.** In a paper published online in the journal Advanced Materials, the researchers report that they’ve developed cellular composite materials that mimic balsa wood. They are extremely light and extremely stiff and actually appear to be better than balsa for wind turbines. (http://www.businessinsider.com/harvard-3-d-printed-fake-balsa-wood-for-wind-turbines-2014-6).

**Wind energy literature survey no. 33.** As a service to readers, Wind Energy regularly conducts literature surveys and publishes lists of relevant articles drawn from recent issues of Wind Energy itself and a large number of periodicals. (http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/we.1782/abstract?campaign=wolearlyview).
New software brings the right wind farm to the right spot. The SOPCAWIND project has developed new software to optimize wind farm placement in Europe, taking into account criteria as varied as wind power, local environment characteristics, potential interference with communication systems, noise, nearby housing exposure to the sun, visual impact or even the existence of archaeological artifacts on site. (http://cordis.europa.eu/news/rcn/36628_en.html).

Fortune 100 companies saved $1.1B using renewable energy. Clean energy is no longer just the bastion of crunchy granola types and companies hoping to improve their public image. Increasing the use of renewable energy has become a targeted goal of almost half of Fortune 500 companies, and with good reason. According to a new report, more than half of Fortune 100 companies collectively saved $1.1 billion in energy costs by rolling out renewable energy programs. (http://www.computerworld.com/s/article/9249496/Fortune_100_companies_saved_1.1B_using_renewable_energy).

Upcoming Workshops & Workshops

Workshop on EPA’s Proposed Clean Power/CAA Section 111(d) Rules. July 14, 2014, DC Conference Center & via webcast. This workshop is open to the public, but registration and fee payment is required. EPA has just released arguably the most important set of proposed rules in its efforts to restrain greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources: regulation of existing and modified fossil fuel power plants under Clean Air Act Section 111(d). The proposals have broad implications for the economy and the environment, pose challenges for harmonizing federal and state action on both environmental and energy fronts, and set the stage for regulation of other sectors under Section 111(d). As a result, it is critical to understand the scope, implications, and nuances of the proposed rules. Timed to take place during EPA's comment period, the Workshop features top experts from government, industry, nonprofits, and academia who will explore practical and legal implications of this significant regulatory undertaking. Join us for this interactive event that takes a "deep dive" into these rules. (http://www.eli.org/events/workshop-epas-proposed-caa-section-111d-rules).

Tools

WINDEExchange is the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) Wind Program's hub of stakeholder engagement and outreach activities. The purpose of WINDEExchange is to help communities weigh the benefits and costs of wind energy, understand the deployment process, and make wind development decisions supported by the best available science and other fact-based information. (http://energy.gov/eere/wind/windexchange).

National Assessment of Ecosystem Carbon Sequestration and Greenhouse Gas Fluxes. View and download the primary data that has been developed by the USGS team in a variety of formats using the LandCarbon Data Tool. Visualize data products, view and interact with maps, charts, and statistics that summarize the results of the USGS assessment. (http://www.usgs.gov/climate_landuse/land_carbon/Data.asp). **NOTE: Data on carbon sequestration for the ecoregions in Nebraska are not yet available. Other information is available to view at this time.

EISPC EZ Mapping Tool. The EISPC Energy Zones Mapping Tool is a free online mapping tool to identify potential clean energy resource areas within the Eastern Transmission Interconnection. (https://eispctools.anl.gov/).

Counties with Zoning Regulations in Nebraska has been added to the Nebraska Wind Energy and Wildlife Project website. Several counties have zoning regulations or ordinances for wind energy
facilities. Several of the counties with zoning have setbacks for commercial scale wind turbines of 600 feet from Wildlife Management Areas, State Recreational Areas, and Wetlands (USFW Types III, IV, and V). Links to all county zoning regulations found through internet searches are available on the website. Please feel free to contact me at windwildlife@unl.edu with edits, suggestions, etc. (http://snr.unl.edu/renewableenergy/wind/windenergydevelopment.asp#zoning).

**Nebraska Rare Species Education for Conservation** website launched! This new website features images, descriptions, range, habitat, population status, information pamphlets, and more on the 27 threatened and endangered species in Nebraska. The website is a great way to access information on Nebraska’s listed species. (http://rarespecies.nebraska.gov/).

**National Climate Change Viewer.** The new tool gives citizens and resource managers the opportunity to look at climate-driven impacts on watersheds and map projected changes at the local, regional, state and watershed levels. (http://www.usgs.gov/climate_landuse/clu_rd/nccv.asp).

**National Wetlands Database, interactive mapping tool completed.** To coincide with American Wetlands Month, which begins May 1, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is announcing the completion of the most comprehensive and detailed U.S. wetland data set ever produced, capping a 35-year effort by the Service to map the extent of the nation’s wetlands. The Wetlands Inventory Mapper (http://www.fws.gov/wetlands/Data/Mapper.html) has digitally mapped and made publically available wetlands in the lower 48 states, Hawaii and dependent territories, as well as 35 % of Alaska. (http://www.agprofessional.com/news/National-Wetlands-Database-interactive-mapping-tool-completed--257553181.html).

**National Wind Coordinating Collaborative (NWCC) Webinars on the Latest Wind-Wildlife Research and Tools.** NWCC/AWWI hosts quarterly webinars on the latest research and tools related to the interactions of wind energy, wildlife, and wildlife habitat. The webinars include time for questions after each presentation. To receive the access information for upcoming webinars, please sign up. If you are interested in sharing your work on a webinar, please contact Ian Evans. (http://nationalwind.org/research/webinars/).

**USGS Interactive Windfarm Mapper.** The USGS created this publicly available national dataset and interactive mapping application of wind turbines. This dataset is built with publicly available data, as well as searching for and identifying individual wind turbines using satellite imagery. The locations of all wind turbines, including the publicly available datasets, were visually verified with high-resolution remote imagery to within plus or minus 10 meters. (http://eerscmap.usgs.gov/windfarm/).

**Developing a Research Framework for Increasing Understanding of Interactions between Eagles and Wind Energy.** In this document, we outline a framework for a national, hypothesis-driven research program on eagles and wind energy. The principal goals of this framework are to guide research that improves our ability to predict and estimate take of eagles at wind energy facilities, to develop measures intended to avoid and minimize the take of eagles at operating wind energy facilities, and to compensate for, or offset, remaining eagle take. (http://awwi.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/AWWI-Eagle-Research-Framework_Final-01-23-14.pdf).

**Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines Webinar Series.** The USFWS has offered a number of webinars related to the Land-Based Wind Energy Guidelines. Recordings of the webinars, presentations, and transcripts are available at: http://www.fws.gov/windenergy/wind_training/wind_training.html.

Upcoming Conferences


AOU●COS●SCO (American Ornithologists’ Union, the Copper Ornithological Society, and the Society of Canadian Ornithologists) Joint Meeting will be September 23-28, 2014 in Estes Park, CO. There will be a symposium on Avian Interactions with Energy Infrastructure: Challenges of Being Green (Chair: Jen Smith) and Effects on Birds of Unconventional Shale Gas Extraction and the New Energy Boom (Chair: Steve Latta) as well as sessions on migration, population ecology, and much more. (http://birdmeetings.org/aoucossco2014/).

Raptor Research Foundation 2014 Conference will be September 24-28, 2014 in Corpus Christi, TX. Associated with the conference is an Avian Power Line Interaction Committee (APLIC) Workshop. (http://www.raptorresearchfoundation.org/conferences/current-conference).

The Wildlife Society Annual Conference will be in Pittsburgh, PA October 25-30, 2014. The Renewable Energy Working Group will be offering a field visit to the Casselman Wind Farm on October 25, 2014. For basic information about the field visit, go to: http://wildlifesociety.org/learn/field-trips/. For more detailed information, go to: http://news.wildlife.org/the-wildlifer-2014-june/news-from-subunits-10/ and search for Renewable Energy Working Group updates.

Wind Wildlife Research Meeting X will be in Broomfield, CO, week of December 1, 2014. Dates TBD. The biennial Wind Wildlife Research Meeting provides an internationally recognized forum for researchers and wind-wildlife stakeholders to hear contributed papers, view research posters, and listen to panels that synthesize the most recent wind power-related wildlife research. (http://nationalwind.org/save-the-date-wind-wildlife-research-meeting-x/).

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Conference on Wind energy and Wildlife impacts will be in Berlin, Germany, March 10-12, 2015. (http://www.cww2015.tu-berlin.de/).


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