

ARGONNE NATIONAL LABORATORY (ANL)

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WIND ENERGY DEVELOPMENT
PROGRAMMATIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA
PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING

+ + + + +

6:30 p.m.

Wednesday,
October 1, 2008

+ + + + +

New York New York Meeting Room
Radisson Hotel Bismarck
605 East Broadway Avenue
Bismarck, North Dakota

+ + + + +

JOHN HAYSE, ANL, Facilitator

ALSO PRESENT:

NICK STAS, Western Area Power Administration
LLOYD JONES, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
KARIN SINCLAIR, National Renewable Energy
Laboratory

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. HAYSE: Welcome to the public
3 scoping meeting for the Upper Great Plains
4 Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement.
5 And before we move into the rest of our
6 program for tonight, if I could, ask everybody
7 in the audience to please double-check that
8 your cell phone is either turned off or put to
9 silent mode or vibrate mode, so -- just as a
10 courtesy to our speakers and to other people
11 in the audience. Okay? All right. Very
12 good.

13 My name is John Hayse; I'm an
14 environmental scientist at Argonne National
15 Laboratory, which is a Department of Energy
16 national lab, and I will be facilitating this
17 public comment session tonight, just so you
18 have a little idea of who I am.

19 The first thing I'd like to do is
20 give you a very brief overview of the NEPA
21 process, what a programmatic EIS is and some
22 basic background about what is being planned

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1 for this particular project. This EIS is
2 being prepared as part of the process that
3 occurs under the National Environmental Policy
4 Act for major federal actions that could have
5 a significant impact on the environment.

6 And Western Area Power
7 Administration and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife
8 Service are the two lead agencies for this
9 particular environmental impact statement, and
10 they've determined that a programmatic EIS is
11 the appropriate tool or document to prepare in
12 this case to evaluate establishing specific
13 programs and policies related to wind energy
14 development within the Upper Great Plains
15 Region. And we'll get into a few more details
16 about exactly what the proposed action is in a
17 few moments.

18 One of the first questions we
19 should probably address is, what is a
20 programmatic EIS? And a programmatic EIS is
21 intended to evaluate the environmental impacts
22 that may occur as the result of implementing

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1 an agency action such as the development of a
2 program or the setting of national policies.

3 So as such, programmatic EIS's
4 typically look at generic impacts of the
5 actions that are proposed. And in this case,
6 that's related to wind energy development and
7 connection to the energy grid. And we will
8 also address potentially applicable mitigation
9 measures.

10 Now, one of the things that a
11 programmatic EIS is not intended to do is
12 evaluate the environmental impacts from
13 specific development projects. Okay? There
14 would be a separate process that would do
15 that. This EIS is intended to help streamline
16 the process that other specific development
17 actions would go through.

18 So what is the proposed action in
19 this particular case? Western and the U.S.
20 Fish and Wildlife Service are interested in
21 establishing a comprehensive environmental
22 program for evaluating proposed wind energy

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1 impacts that would result from connection to
2 Western's transmission system or that would be
3 placed on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
4 wetland or grassland easements within the
5 Upper Great Plains Region.

6 Now, one of the intents of the
7 proposed action is that we would identify, or
8 that the agencies would identify mitigation
9 strategies, standard construction practices
10 and best management practices that could be
11 used to reduce the potential environmental
12 impacts from those development activities.

13 One of the things that's typically
14 done or should be done for environmental
15 impact statements is to evaluate alternatives.

16 And in this case, at least three alternatives
17 will be considered.

18 First, the proposed action that I
19 just described, which is the development of a
20 comprehensive program for wind energy
21 development by the two agencies. Second, a
22 no-action alternative would be evaluated.

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1 Now, keep in mind "no action" doesn't
2 necessarily mean that no wind energy would
3 occur within either -- that would connect to
4 Western's transmission grid or that would
5 occur on wetland or grassland easements. It
6 simply means that the existing situation would
7 continue to occur.

8 And you'll hear more description
9 about that tonight, but right now, in a very
10 general sense, the existing situation is that
11 proposals for connecting to the energy grid or
12 proposals to develop wind energy projects on
13 wetland or grassland easements are evaluated
14 on a case-by-case basis. So a full NEPA
15 evaluation is done for each of those
16 particular projects.

17 Another alternative that's being
18 considered at this point is that Western's
19 portion of the proposed action, which is
20 related to connection to the transmission
21 grid, would go forward; however, the Service
22 may determine that they would not allow

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1 further wind development on easements that
2 they're responsible for.

3 Now, as part of this scoping
4 process that we're doing right now and that
5 this meeting is intended to be part of, other
6 alternatives may also be identified that would
7 be evaluated in the programmatic environmental
8 impact statement. So that brings us to the
9 question about what is scoping?

10 And basically, scoping is the first
11 phase of public involvement that occurs in an
12 environmental impact statement. It's a part
13 of the process where the agencies intend to
14 gather information from the public and other
15 organizations related to the proposed action,
16 which alternatives should be considered in the
17 impact statement, what are some of the
18 significant issues that need to be analyzed in
19 that programmatic environmental impact
20 statement, perhaps information about data that
21 are available that could be used to help us
22 conduct the analyses related to what the

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1 environmental impacts might be from the
2 proposed action, and other concerns that
3 interested individuals or organizations may
4 have.

5 So this is a chance for the public
6 and those organizations to provide feedback to
7 the agencies about the things that they're
8 interested in having evaluated in the impact
9 statement.

10 Now, this is only one of the public
11 opportunities for involvement in this
12 programmatic EIS that will occur. As you can
13 see on this slide, public scoping began on
14 September 11. And we will continue to solicit
15 public comments, or scoping comments, through
16 November 10 of 2008.

17 Now, sometime during the fall or
18 the winter of 2009, the draft EIS should be --
19 will be available for review by the public and
20 by other agencies or organizations that would
21 like to provide comments on that impact
22 statement. And then, finally, the schedule is

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1 calling for the final environmental impact
2 statement to be available; sometime during the
3 summer of 2010 is our best guess right now.

4 One of the ways that the public can
5 gather information about this project is
6 through the project website. And you can see
7 the URL address for that website on this
8 screen. And it should be also on the fact
9 sheets and some of the other pieces of paper
10 that you were provided as you registered for
11 the meeting tonight.

12 Now, that public website has
13 information about the EIS process in general
14 and specifically related to this project; it
15 has information about wind energy resources
16 and technologies. It will be a repository for
17 documents related to the EIS that the public
18 will be able to download and look at. Updates
19 about the project and information about the
20 project schedule will be provided there as
21 well.

22 And then finally, we provide an

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1 online comment form that can be used to
2 provide either scoping comments at this point.

3 Or later, when the review draft or when the
4 draft EIS is available, it can be used to
5 provide comments on that. And then there's
6 also a possibility on that website that you
7 can sign up if you're interested in getting
8 email notifications related to activities for
9 this project. So as major updates occur to
10 the project, documents are prepared, and
11 things like that, email notifications will be
12 sent out to the people that sign up for that
13 notification.

14 Now, the way that tonight's program
15 is structured is that we have three speakers.

16 We have Nick Stas from Western Area Power
17 Administration, we have Lloyd Jones from the
18 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Division of
19 Refuges, and Karin Sinclair, who is with the
20 National Renewable Energy Lab's Wind
21 Technology Center. And each of these speakers
22 will give a brief presentation.

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1 In the case of Mr. Stas' and Mr.
2 Jones' presentations, those will be related
3 to -- those will provide information about
4 what their agencies do, what their interest is
5 in wind energy technology in particular.
6 Karin Sinclair's presentation will deal
7 specifically with wind technology, wind
8 resources and other general information about
9 wind energy development in particular.

10 So with that, I'd like to turn it
11 over to our first Agency speaker, Nick Stas.

12 MR. STAS: Thank you, John.

13 And welcome to everybody that came
14 out on this beautiful night in Bismarck. My
15 name is Nick Stas; I'm the Regional
16 Environmental Manager out of Billings,
17 Montana, for the Upper Great Plains Region,
18 and I'm going to give first a brief overview
19 of Western.

20 I know some of the folks know about
21 us already; I see our Basin customers and
22 other customers that are here. But this'll be

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1 a little bit of a review for your folks. But
2 I want to give the big picture of how this
3 fits in, why we're embarking on this
4 programmatic EIS, and also to give an
5 opportunity for some resources for folks that
6 want to know more or want to get involved and
7 comment.

8 This is the early stages; the
9 scoping is the first opportunity for
10 interaction by the public. And I want to
11 first say that I'm very excited about having
12 U.S. Fish & Wildlife as a joint lead agency.
13 And we've dealt with them on a site-by-site
14 basis on some of the wind projects we've
15 already had.

16 I'm also very pleased that we have
17 Argonne National Laboratory, our colleagues
18 from the Department of Energy, assisting us
19 with the analysis of the effects of a
20 programmatic wind approach. They are
21 extremely experienced. They prepared a
22 programmatic wind energy EIS for all the BLM

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1 lands in the western United States already and
2 have a significant amount of experience in
3 this area, especially on the programmatic EIS
4 approach. And National Energy Labs has
5 extreme expertise in the wind technology
6 arena.

7 That being said, I'd like to
8 introduce a few of my Western colleagues that
9 are in the audience. Mr. Ed Weber is manager
10 of the transmission. He's back there.

11 Also, assisting and working on the
12 EIS, Mr. Mark Wieringa from our corporate
13 office; from our corporate communications
14 office, Mr. Randy Wilkerson. And I don't see
15 my other colleagues right now, but Dirk
16 Shulund and Rod O'Sullivan are both
17 environmental specialists who work with me in
18 the Billings regional office.

19 Well, what is Western? As has been
20 stated, we're in the U.S. Department of
21 Energy, an agency. We wholesale electric
22 power, hydroelectric power, to our firm power

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1 customers and others.

2 When we were formed in 1977 by the
3 Department of Energy Organization Act a lot of
4 the hydroelectric power marketing was done by
5 either the Bureau of Reclamation or, a small
6 amount, by the Corps of Engineers. That was
7 all folded into the Department of Energy,
8 particularly in this part of the world, all
9 the Pick-Sloan hydropower.

10 We're one of several. Bonneville
11 Power is in the Pacific Northwest. They have
12 a lot of water up there -- and rainfall. They
13 market about three times the power of all of
14 Western area power. There's Southwestern
15 Power, out of Tulsa, Oklahoma; Bonneville's
16 out of Portland; and Southeastern Power in the
17 southeastern United States.

18 So there's three power marketing
19 entities. For our programmatic EIS, we're
20 going to be talking about the Upper Great
21 Plains Region. And we'll see more. This is a
22 great place for wind power development. And

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1 we have three other regional offices that
2 won't be involved in this particular effort.

3 As I mentioned, we market the power
4 from the federal hydrodams. In the case of
5 the Upper Great Plains Region, it's the main
6 stem core dams on the Missouri River, as well
7 as Canyon Ferry on the upper Missouri and the
8 Yellowtail Dam on the Bighorn.

9 Western has 17,000 miles of high-
10 voltage transmission line in 15 states, and
11 roughly about 7,000 miles of that is in the
12 Upper Great Plains Region. And we deliver
13 voltage, wholesale power, to people that
14 retail it. And our firm power customers are
15 primarily rural electrics, co-ops,
16 municipalities and other government agencies.

17 We have today in Western, 671
18 customers, as I mentioned: cities and towns,
19 rural electrics, irrigation districts, public
20 power districts, federal and state agencies.
21 And we've made allocations to Native American
22 tribes. This was -- Western was permitted to

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1 do this under an energy policy act to allocate
2 power benefits to tribes. And the preference
3 entities, of course, are identified by
4 definition by the Reclamation Project Act.

5 How we're a little different is
6 that we're funded by congressional
7 appropriations, but most definitely the
8 revenue comes from our power customers. And
9 one of our real goals in life is to keep the
10 rates as low as possible, cost-based rates.

11 What that means is what it costs us
12 to operate and build a system gets included in
13 our rates and we repay the U.S. Treasury for
14 the capital investment they made to build the
15 dams and to build the transmission
16 infrastructure. And to operate and maintain
17 the dams comes out of the hydropower rates.

18 We voluntarily comply with FERC
19 rulings. Well, voluntarily -- we're actually
20 complying by DOE policy. The Department of
21 Energy says we will comply with the FERC
22 requirements, and specifically this involves

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1 open-access transmission. And we'll get into
2 that a little more.

3 What we do. We market the
4 hydropower, transmit it to our power
5 customers.

6 Out of our Watertown Operation
7 office, we control parts of the energy grid.
8 This is what John talked about. And
9 specifically, where we make decisions about
10 regarding who interconnects with Western's
11 part of this energy grid is where we have a
12 federal decision where the National
13 Environmental Policy Act kicks in.

14 We provide open-access
15 transmission, and we're evolving to meet the
16 changing power generation and transmission
17 environment. One thing that I should say is
18 that we do not currently have load growth
19 responsibility. Our firm power customers have
20 supplemental power, and I see Basin Electric
21 here that provides that generation.

22 We have a set amount of hydropower

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1 that varies somewhat on a good water year or
2 bad water year. And that supplemental power
3 is primarily made up of Basin Electric.

4 And we'll get into the power grid.

5 As you can see, a power grid starts off at
6 generation, of course. And generation
7 includes wind and then the hydropower and the
8 thermal power, and then it gets into the
9 wholesale and transmission.

10 This is the grid part of it.
11 That -- we operate and maintain a good
12 section -- not all of it, but a good section
13 of this grid. And it goes to the distribution
14 customers. These are, you know, the co-ops,
15 municipalities and rural electrics, and these
16 are the people that you see your bill from.
17 And then there's end users down here --
18 residential, commercial and industrial.

19 Western and wind. We've had a
20 number of interconnection requests. And right
21 now, as John Hayse said, we're doing our NEPA
22 obligations one project at a time. And

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1 there's from independent wind project
2 developers, but other folks -- utilities --
3 and the requests are being addressed in the
4 order they are received.

5 Now, one of the things that we
6 have -- and I'll give a website address for
7 this -- is that we have a queue for the open
8 access. People have to submit an
9 interconnection request. And in there, it
10 tells -- it gives the environmental process.

11 And at our website at wapa.gov, you
12 can go into the transmission part and it gives
13 all the guidance on how you request an
14 interconnection request, and it also gives the
15 guidance on what will happen environmentally.

16 Now, the current situation is a one-by-one
17 type of analysis.

18 The goals of the wind energy
19 program. We want to streamline the process
20 for these requests. You know, there was a
21 question previously -- we were in Sioux Falls
22 last night -- are we going to stop the one-by-

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1 one analysis while we complete this
2 programmatic effort? The answer's no. That
3 will still keep going on in parallel, but any
4 information that's developed, of course, or
5 mitigation -- or information will be shared
6 with folks as we complete this process.

7 Our goal in developing wind is to
8 help protect the natural resources, including
9 those whose mission is covered by Fish &
10 Wildlife that Lloyd will talk about in a
11 while, and also get the wind energy developed.

12 And we don't think it's pick one, either/or;
13 we think we can do both and do a good job of
14 both. Western's open-access transmission
15 service tariff has also procedures for
16 addressing these wind energy interconnection
17 requests.

18 Okay. The key objectives. We
19 touched on them briefly. Address the generic
20 concerns of wind energy, to develop a
21 streamlined approach, and to make it go faster
22 and in reasonable as common sense as possible,

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1 develop and present mitigation measures.

2 And there's a concept called
3 adaptive management here. That means we learn
4 as we go along. What's not known today? What
5 types of things can be done that we don't have
6 the problems with interactions with birds or
7 species? Is it siting issues? Is it design
8 and technology issues? You'll hear more about
9 it from Karin. What works, and what doesn't
10 work, and what still gets the job done?

11 That last thing. Provide guide and
12 information for the interconnection
13 applicants. Our hope is that we will develop
14 enough information through this process to let
15 folks know at least where there may be
16 significant areas of concern or other issues,
17 whether they be protected species or a call to
18 resources, to let folks know in advance that
19 this is all the information and you can choose
20 based on this to go down that road.

21 Okay. Thank you. As I said, we
22 have at wapa.gov information on our

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1 interconnection process. We've also got
2 information about Western in particular, a lot
3 of information. So that's a very good
4 website.

5 On NEPA in particular, the
6 President's Council on Environmental Quality
7 has a very good website on getting involved in
8 the NEPA process. It's nepa.gov. You can go
9 and Google that, and it gives you a real good
10 citizens' guide to getting involved in the
11 process.

12 I'm going to take a couple
13 questions. Keep in mind it's specific to any
14 information about Western right now. Comments
15 on scoping, on our approach and the EIS should
16 wait, but any questions or clarifications I'd
17 be glad to answer right now.

18 (Pause.)

19 MR. STAS: Well, thank you.

20 Lloyd?

21 MR. JONES: Thank you, Nick.

22 As well, from the Fish & Wildlife

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1 Service, we appreciate everybody coming
2 tonight. The Fish & Wildlife Service is a
3 public agency, and we're wanting to review
4 this action we may or may not take. And we
5 can only do it with good input from the
6 public. So we certainly appreciate folks
7 coming to provide that.

8 And I want to thank Western because
9 they are a very technical-based agency, a
10 federal agency. We're more biological based,
11 but we have a lot of issues to deal with with
12 wind. So it's a unique opportunity for the
13 Fish & Wildlife Service to partner with
14 Western, and we're looking forward to being
15 able to do a more public service kind of
16 review of this whole issue.

17 I want to introduce a couple folks
18 tonight that are here with Fish & Wildlife
19 Service with the refuge division. First is
20 Mick Erickson. Mick is our project leader
21 down in the southeast.

22 Raise your hand, Mick.

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1 (Pause.)

2 MR. JONES: Down out of the Kulm
3 Wetland Management District, Mick has worked a
4 lot with wind projects over the last couple of
5 years. In his district, there is a Florida
6 Power & Light project, two of them, I guess.
7 Tetonka project -- that's in his district, as
8 well. So we've worked a lot with those folks.

9 I want to introduce Tammy
10 Fairbanks. Tammy is our state supervisor for
11 the realty program with Fish & Wildlife
12 Service. As you heard John say, part of this
13 whole review process deals with Fish &
14 Wildlife Service easements. Tammy's in charge
15 of the division that takes care of acquiring
16 those easements, working with landowners on
17 those.

18 So with that brief introduction, as
19 Nick did, I'll run through a few slides to,
20 hopefully, give you a better understanding of
21 the Fish & Wildlife Service in relationship to
22 this programmatic EIS. The first thing I need

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1 to do is tell you about the mission of the
2 Fish & Wildlife Service, and that's just a lot
3 of words.

4 But the key thing is the bottom of
5 this first paragraph up here where it talks
6 about habitats and wildlife for the benefit of
7 the American people. The specific mission for
8 the National Wildlife Refuge System, which is
9 who I work for, that division -- as well as
10 Tammy and Mick. The mission of the National
11 Wildlife Refuge is to manage the networks of
12 lands. And again, here you see that, at the
13 end: For present and future generations of
14 Americans.

15 A lot of people feel the Fish &
16 Wildlife Service only cares about wildlife,
17 you know, and we only care about ducks and
18 ducks are more important than people. But our
19 mission is -- specifically, we manage wildlife
20 for people. So I think that's an important
21 clarification to make.

22 One of the things that -- one of

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1 the areas of the continent that we look for to
2 carry out that mission is the Prairie Pothole
3 Region. You can see where strategically North
4 Dakota lies within that.

5 And that's -- why the Fish &
6 Wildlife Service for many, many decades has
7 had a presence in North Dakota is because of
8 the location of the Prairie Pothole Region.
9 It's a very unique region. It's the most
10 productive migratory bird breeding habitat in
11 North America, and it's the relationship of
12 the wetlands and grasslands that makes it so.

13 It's not just the water; it's the
14 combination of water and grasslands. A lot of
15 the migratory birds that we're responsible for
16 managing actually nest in upper grassland
17 areas, as well as the wetlands. So it's a
18 combination of both, and you're going to hear
19 me refer to them both.

20 But North Dakota and the Prairie
21 Pothole Region is very unique. Again, it's
22 the most productive area in North America.

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1 But part of the challenge we face is a lot of
2 the grass in that Prairie Pothole Region has
3 been converted and continues to be converted
4 to crop land. That creates a challenge for us
5 in fulfilling those responsibilities that
6 Congress has provided to us.

7 The same with wetlands. Over half
8 of the wetlands in North Dakota -- in some
9 parts of the Prairie Pothole Region over 90
10 percent of the wetlands have been lost. So
11 that in itself creates a challenge for us to
12 look out for the best interests of migratory
13 birds and wildlife when there's been that much
14 pressure on the landscape.

15 We have a strategy, and that is to
16 protect wetland and grassland habitat in the
17 Prairie Pothole Region, that area that you saw
18 there, sufficient to sustain 93 percent of the
19 breeding population and productivity of water
20 fowl. Somebody may say, Well, why is it 93
21 percent? Why is it not 100? Why isn't it 90?

22 The reason for this is simply that there are

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1 some areas of the Prairie Pothole Region that
2 have -- most of the grasslands have been lost.

3 Most of the wetlands have been drained.

4 There still might be some habitat
5 there, but there's not enough. We realize
6 it's going to be very difficult to protect
7 that. So when you eliminate those areas, it
8 just comes out statistically to be about 93
9 percent. But that's the government. You got
10 to be specific, so we didn't round it down to
11 90.

12 So what's left to accomplish that?

13 We need -- we've identified -- we've done a
14 biological analysis of what that's going to
15 take. 1.4 million acres of wetlands and 10.4
16 million acres of grassland that are remaining
17 out there that we've identified. In order to
18 accomplish that 93 percent, if that -- we're
19 going to be successful, we have to accomplish
20 that additional protection in the United
21 States portion of the Prairie Pothole Region.

22 So how do we do that? I'm sure a

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1 lot of you in this room -- if you're from
2 North Dakota, you've heard about the Fish &
3 Wildlife Service's wetland easements. We've
4 acquired easements dating back as far as 1958,
5 and -- but still, some people might not be
6 totally familiar with them.

7 What do these easements do? They
8 protect wetlands from being drained, burned or
9 filled. However, we don't want to acquire the
10 land; the land stays in private ownership, and
11 they are perpetual easements. And there's a
12 lot of other easements that are similar to the
13 one that Fish & Wildlife Service has that, if
14 the land changes hands, the easement stays on
15 the property and the easement is perpetual.

16 But this bottom one? All other
17 uses of the wetlands are allowed. In other
18 words, if we're in a dry spell and the
19 wetlands go dry, the landowner can plow them
20 up; he can farm them. A lot of wetlands in
21 North Dakota are hayed. That's perfectly fine
22 under the easement program.

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1 Again, the wetland easement only
2 protects the wetland from being drained,
3 burned or filled. It's a very limited
4 easement right that's acquired from the
5 landowner, always from willing landowners
6 interested in selling and protecting the
7 wetlands on their property.

8 The other part of that program I
9 mentioned is the grassland aspect of it.
10 Almost identical, it protects grasslands from
11 being converted to other uses. That's all it
12 is. The landowner can graze those grassland
13 areas at any time, and the landowner can hay
14 those areas after July 15.

15 Again, it's a very limited
16 grassland easement. We often refer to it as
17 it's a green-side-up easement. It's just to
18 keep the grass in grass. The land, as with
19 wetlands, stays in private ownership, stays
20 with the land in change of ownership. And
21 again, as I mentioned with the wetlands, all
22 other uses are controlled by the landowner.

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1 So both the wetland and grassland easements
2 are very limited easement rights.

3 So what does it look like from
4 above? This would be -- if you took an aerial
5 picture, this would be a good example of both
6 a wetland and a grassland easement. This
7 landowner was interested probably in a
8 ranching situation. All this area up here is
9 grass; all these, wetlands.

10 In this situation, we would acquire
11 from the landowner both wetland and grassland
12 easements. The wetlands just stay wetlands,
13 and the grass just stays grass. That's
14 basically it. Again, the landowner can use
15 the land as he see always has, and can
16 continue into the future.

17 Okay. So how successful has the
18 program actually been? We can look up here at
19 North Dakota: 912,000 acres of wetland
20 easements, 300,000 of grassland, for a total
21 of about 1.2 million acres. If we look at the
22 area that's included in this review, which is

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1 North Dakota, South Dakota and Montana, in
2 total, we have about 2.7 million acres of
3 easements that exist out in the landscape.
4 And you're going to see in a second here why
5 that's important.

6 This is the distribution of those
7 wetland and grassland easements. And you can
8 see up here in North Dakota where most of them
9 are. They're pretty well distributed across
10 the entire state with the exception of the Red
11 River Valley.

12 And that's -- again, that would be
13 an example of why it's not 93 percent and not
14 100 percent because there's going to be
15 limited areas over here in potential for
16 wetland or grassland easements. The easements
17 extend out into Montana, but not to the extent
18 that they are here in North Dakota.

19 Okay. The challenges we face. The
20 wind development has expanded rapidly, and
21 it's difficult. As you saw in the previous
22 slide, there are a lot of easements. It's

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1 difficult for wind development to totally
2 avoid easements. So we know that's a
3 challenge. We're trying to work with the wind
4 companies and deal with that.

5 If we look to the future, there's a
6 large overlap between where the key wind areas
7 are in where we are interested in acquiring
8 easements. As you saw, our goal is 10.4
9 million acres additional, 1.4 million acres
10 additional of wetland. But those are in the
11 same areas where wind wants to expand. It's
12 the -- I think you're going to hear from Karin
13 or maybe Nick. It's the Saudi Arabia of wind.

14 So we realize that; that's a challenge.

15 How do we work with landowners and
16 the wind to address the interests that they
17 have? One of the things we need to understand
18 is the interaction of wind and wildlife, what
19 impacts there are. How do we deal with
20 that -- best management practices, that kind
21 of thing? And then how do we come up with the
22 right mix of easements, wildlife and wind?

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1 That's the challenge that we face today.

2 I want to point out that it's not
3 just wind that the Fish & Wildlife Service
4 deals with. Our state is divided up into
5 different districts. Mick is in charge of
6 one, but he deals with all kinds of requests.

7 People come in. The rural water district
8 want to bury a water line. They want to have
9 a power line. The county or state wants to do
10 something with a road that affects the wetland
11 or grassland easements.

12 So there are a lot of requested
13 uses that we deal with. We have a set of
14 criteria; we try to deal with these on a
15 consistent basis. We feel that's very
16 important. And we also have a series of
17 internal policies and issues.

18 NEPA, which you heard Nick talk
19 about in some detail. There's also the
20 National Historic Preservation Act. And then
21 we have a bunch of internal challenges that we
22 face that -- Congress has told us, Look, if

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1 you're going to consider something, this is
2 how you have to do it.

3 I want to point out that our
4 general approach with wetland and grassland
5 easements is reasonable accommodation. And
6 again, that could be a road project, that
7 could be a buried water line; it could be a
8 landowner that wants to build additional
9 facilities, expand his operation with
10 buildings, or whatever. We face a lot of
11 requests. Wind is one of those that we want
12 to try to do a very good job of working with
13 the wind industry and landowners to deal with
14 it in an appropriate manner.

15 Okay. What's the current status?
16 Where are we at now? What has the Fish &
17 Wildlife Service done?

18 We've authorized three projects,
19 with about 25 towers, on Fish & Wildlife
20 Service easements, one of which I mentioned
21 that Nick has dealt with, the Tetonka project
22 down in southeastern North Dakota.

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1 Administratively, we've done that with two
2 projects with a right-of-way permit, and one
3 was an exchange. And that's a little bit
4 complicated. I won't go into the details of
5 that.

6 And we're working now in the
7 region, North and South Dakota and Montana,
8 with about 40 different wind projects. So
9 it's a pretty active area of involvement right
10 now, and we know it's going to continue.

11 So what are we looking for in terms
12 of this EIS? First, you know, we want to
13 better understand the impacts individually and
14 cumulative impacts -- Nick mentioned that --
15 trying to look at the whole issue as a whole,
16 rather than do it on an individual basis.
17 It's just much more efficient.

18 We want to review research, and if
19 there's additional needs, we need to identify
20 those. Nick mentioned also the streamlining
21 and environmental compliance. It's real
22 burdensome for us and wind companies and

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1 landowners to look at one project and then in
2 the next week do a whole NEPA process and look
3 at another one. So we think that this is
4 going to help us look at it more streamlined.

5 And then provide recommendations
6 and guidance to wind companies. We've found
7 through our experience working with wind
8 companies that they're really good to work
9 with; they want to make adjustments, and they
10 want to do what they can to minimize impacts.

11 And we've been real pleased with our
12 relationship with wind companies, and we want
13 to be able to provide them good advice and
14 recommendation. So this process, too, may
15 help us do a better job of that.

16 And I needed a slide to tell me
17 when to stop talking. But as well, as Nick
18 said at the end, if there are any questions
19 about anything that I've presented on these
20 slides, anything with the numbers or the
21 strategies or the plans or whatever, I'd
22 certainly try to answer those. And later on,

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1 there'll be all kinds of opportunity for folks
2 to offer comments.

3 But anybody have any questions?

4 (Pause.)

5 MR. JONES: You're going to let me
6 off easy?

7 Yes, sir.

8 MALE VOICE: As I understand, this
9 applies only to Fish & Wildlife easements; it
10 has nothing to do with Fish & Wildlife -- to
11 wind projects elsewhere within the region.

12 MR. JONES: Yeah.

13 Did every -- could you hear his
14 question in the back there? His question --

15 I'm sorry, John.

16 MR. HAYSE: If you could, could
17 you --

18 MR. JONES: Yeah. I'll just repeat
19 it for this one. And the question --

20 And you correct me if I get off
21 base here.

22 The question is, is this process

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1 reviewing just the Fish & Wildlife Service's
2 involvement with wetland and grassland
3 easements, or does it also relate to other
4 Fish & Wildlife Service interests in terms,
5 for example, like endangered species and
6 things like that.

7 MALE VOICE: I was referring
8 geographically, for instance, on Indian
9 reservations that have no such easements.

10 MR. JONES: Oh.

11 MALE VOICE: Is this process
12 irrelevant?

13 MR. JONES: From a -- I'm going to
14 maybe ask Nick to respond to that. From the
15 Fish & Wildlife Service's part of this
16 programmatic EIS, it would not include Indian
17 reservations or other lands because, as you
18 point out, there are not easements there. But
19 I don't want to stop short and leave you with
20 the impression that there may not be
21 involvement with the tribes.

22 MR. STAS: We were looking at, oh,

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1 potential interconnections with our grid. To
2 the extent that we have Western transmission
3 lines across some reservation land, there is a
4 potential for interconnection there that would
5 be looked at. So the -- part of this is all
6 the potential places for interconnection. And
7 we have a chart outside that shows where this
8 area is, and that's the scope -- and also,
9 specifically, all of the Fish & Wildlife
10 Service easements.

11 MALE VOICE: Thank you.

12 MR. JONES: We get it?

13 (Pause.)

14 MR. JONES: Anybody else specific
15 to --

16 MR. BINA: Yeah. One more.
17 Clarence Bina, Lewis and Clark Wildlife Club.

18 On this very same thing, on
19 exclusive easement properties -- wetlands,
20 grasslands and native prairies -- so does that
21 mean you're not going to consider these other
22 non-disturbed areas at all in --

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1 MR. JONES: Not for the Fish &
2 Wildlife Service. This programmatic is only
3 going to look at the relationship of wind
4 development on wetland and grassland
5 easements. However, there is a connection to
6 those things that you're mentioning because,
7 as you saw in here, our goal is to acquire
8 more wetlands and more easements and protect
9 more wetlands and protect more.

10 So those are not under easement
11 now. But the program interest is to continue
12 to work with landowners to conserve those. So
13 to your question, I think there is going to be
14 some of addressing that need in this
15 programmatic.

16 MR. BINA: So that would be U.S.
17 Fish & Wildlife Service and not WAPA?

18 MR. JONES: Correct. Fair?

19 MR. STAS: Yeah. We don't acquire
20 easements for that.

21 MR. JONES: Anybody?

22 Yes?

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1 MALE VOICE: On these easements, on
2 a site-specific basis, what -- would you do
3 like an environmental assessment or a tiered
4 EIS? What kind of environmental review are
5 you going to do on a site-specific basis?

6 MR. JONES: Project by project,
7 once this is done, we will still do an
8 environmental review, and that may be an EA.
9 It may be a ROD, a Record of Decision, process
10 review. But there will have to be a step-down
11 individual NEPA review to that project; it
12 just won't be a full-blown EIS.

13 I think there was somebody else
14 somewhere.

15 Yes, sir.

16 MALE VOICE: If's there's a request
17 for mitigation in a specific project -- to
18 follow up on his question -- before the EIS is
19 completed, how do you envision the impact of
20 the EIS on a site-specific request?

21 MR. JONES: Well, for one thing,
22 you know, we're dealing with projects now, and

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1 we're dealing with mitigation and replacement
2 acres. And that's not going to stop. We're
3 going to -- as Nick pointed out, for their
4 review, they're not going to stop with their
5 review of interconnections and other things.
6 And we're not going to either.

7 Like I said, we have 40 projects
8 that in some way, shape or form we're dealing
9 with. We're not going to say, Stop, we've got
10 to wait for two years until this EIS. We're
11 just going to keep going.

12 I guess, in terms of the future,
13 you know, when this programmatic is done,
14 there's -- because of that exchange, with a
15 reversionary clause, there may be replacement
16 on an individual project basis that we will
17 address with the companies. But we're doing
18 that now. We may potentially continue to do
19 that as a result of the outcome of this
20 review.

21 As John pointed out, we may also
22 conclude that we're not going to do that. But

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1 that's part of what we will address. But for
2 now, if that answers your question, we're
3 going to keep going and keep doing these
4 reviews that we're working with the companies
5 now. Nothing's going to stop.

6 (Pause.)

7 MR. JONES: Karin?

8 MS. SINCLAIR: Thank you.

9 Okay. I was asked to give a
10 presentation on wind technology, so this is
11 going to be a very quick overview of wind
12 technology.

13 I'm from the National Renewable
14 Energy Laboratory. And this is a photograph
15 of the National Wind Technology Center, which
16 is just south of Boulder, Colorado. And we do
17 research on components, and we'll soon have a
18 couple of state-of-the-art large wind turbines
19 sited here. There we go. Okay.

20 So, very quickly, the presentation
21 is going to include an overview on the
22 technology itself, the capacity that's been

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1 installed, what a project configuration might
2 look like, information on transmission and
3 operational considerations, the benefits of
4 wind, and then the environmental issues that
5 we need to consider.

6 And peppered throughout the
7 presentation are photographs of wind farms
8 that are already installed in this Upper Great
9 Plains Region. So this is the Tetonka project
10 that's been mentioned a couple of times that
11 straddles the South Dakota and North Dakota
12 borders.

13 So technology has evolved over
14 time. If you look at the far left of this
15 diagram here, those are state-of-the-art wind
16 turbines back in the '80s, and they're about
17 100 kW in size. Today -- in 2007, the average
18 size wind turbine that was installed was 2.2
19 MW, and what we call the workhorse turbine is
20 about 1.4 MW. So you can see that we're
21 quickly evolving to an even larger wind
22 turbine.

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1 On a land-based level, there may be
2 some constraints to the cap of the size of
3 those turbines, although there's still some
4 discussion about maybe being able to get over
5 the transportation issues that we're closely
6 approaching. And then on an offshore basis,
7 there's still some discussion of how large
8 those wind turbines can actually be, but you
9 can see that they're larger than the
10 expectations for land-based turbines today.

11 And on the bottom of this slide,
12 I've overlapped the history of the research
13 meetings that we've held with regards to
14 mostly avian impacts from wind and, more
15 recently, some of the bat impacts that have
16 occurred. So you can see that there's been a
17 consistent approach to addressing these
18 issues, and I'll talk about those at the end
19 of the presentation.

20 So very simply, what is wind energy
21 technology? The wind turns the blades, which
22 spin the shaft that's connected to the

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1 generator and that makes electricity -- very
2 simply. If you can put a bunch of turbines
3 together, we call that a wind farm or a wind
4 project. And that power is integrated into
5 the transmission system.

6 This is a prototype for low-wind-
7 speed turbines. You saw the map outside of
8 where the wind resource is in the United
9 States. There's a lot of areas outside of the
10 Upper Great Plains where there isn't a lot of
11 wind.

12 And so this is the technology that
13 we've been developing to capture wind in those
14 environments, but they'll also work in the
15 higher-wind-speed environments. So you can
16 see the size of this turbine is considerably
17 bigger than some of the early turbines.

18 So where is the capacity installed?
19 Worldwide, as of January '08, there are about
20 90,000 MW, and the European community
21 contributed to more than half of that, about
22 55,000 MW. North America in January '07 had

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1 about almost 17,000 MW installed. And as of
2 last month, we broke the 20,000 MW threshold.

3 And the rest of the world
4 contributes about the same as North America.
5 And you can see in the next few years, the
6 European community is still expected to
7 contribute a significant amount of growth in
8 capacity installed from wind.

9 And if we look again at the maps
10 that are actually out on the wall over there,
11 we can see where the wind resource is in the
12 United States. And the Upper Great Plains is
13 a main player in this arena. This Saudi
14 Arabia of America was already mentioned.
15 That's kind of a phrase that's been thrown
16 around.

17 But if you look at where the
18 capacity's installed, it's not in this region
19 of the country. So there's a disconnect.
20 There's a mismatch between where the
21 opportunities are to capture this wind and
22 where the wind technology is actually

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1 installed.

2 And if you look at California, with
3 the exception of offshore, you wouldn't expect
4 them to have much installed. But in fact,
5 they do. And that has to do with policies and
6 other things that happened in early
7 development of the technology. But there's a
8 tremendous opportunity for this region to
9 contribute.

10 Let me go back just a minute. So
11 recently, there's been an analysis done that
12 suggests that we can capture 20 percent -- we
13 can generate 20 percent of our electricity
14 needs from wind by 2030. But in order to do
15 that, we need to really ramp up the
16 contributions across the country. And so the
17 next series of slides shows you how the
18 analysis has played out, where the various
19 contributions will come from.

20 So this is 2012. And you'll see
21 there's a little bit of offshore, which we
22 don't have right now. The little square in

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1 the state represents the amount of land that
2 would be necessary to meet those capacity
3 contributions. 2018, we see far more
4 contributions from other states.

5 And then we start to see some real
6 big contributions from South Dakota and this
7 area of the country, the Upper Great Plains.
8 And then finally, in 2030, this is -- if
9 you'll look at offshore, both on the Atlantic
10 side and Pacific side, we have Great Lakes and
11 also Gulf contributions. All of these areas
12 need to contribute in order for us to meet the
13 goal and the expectations of 20 percent from
14 wind by 2030.

15 So today, what does a typical wind
16 farm look like -- a wind project? They're
17 really primarily these three-bladed upwind
18 turbines. As I mentioned, last year the
19 average size was 2.2 MW. And it's going to
20 increase probably by the end of '08.

21 The towers that these turbines are
22 placed on range in size from 80 meters to

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1 about 150 meters. The layout will be
2 variable; it'll be dependent upon a number of
3 factors, including the wind regime, the land
4 leases that are secured by the developer, and
5 the size of the turbines.

6 But in general, what we can say is
7 that the turbines will be placed two to three-
8 rotor diameters apart within a row of
9 turbines, and then the rows will be placed
10 about ten-rotor diameters apart. And this is
11 so that there's no turbulence interference
12 between one turbine and another.

13 And then power generation is a
14 question that comes up frequently. What --
15 this is also dependent on a number of factors
16 like the capacity factor and the size of the
17 turbines and the average consumption of a
18 household, and the wind regime.

19 But we could say on average,
20 assuming an average wind speed of Class 3 to
21 4, which you can see out on the maps if you
22 want to know what that means, and an average

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1 household consumption of just under 900 kW
2 hours a month, a 1-MW wind turbine will supply
3 enough electricity to support 225 to 300
4 households.

5 So what does a developer need to
6 think about? Well, first and foremost,
7 they're interested in making money. So they
8 need to look at, What is the project going to
9 generate in terms of energy output? And the
10 energy output is a function of the wind speed
11 cubed.

12 So one of the reasons that wind
13 turbines are getting taller and taller is
14 because they need to go up into the higher
15 wind regimes. And one of the reasons there is
16 a lot of development interest in this part of
17 the country is because there's great wind
18 speeds.

19 But the developer also needs to
20 have access to transmission. If they can't
21 export their product, then there's no reason
22 to build a project. They need to secure some

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1 entity to sell that output to, and typically
2 it's a power purchase agreement with a
3 utility. They need to line up the landowners
4 that are going to lease them the land for them
5 to put this project on, and then they need to
6 access their permits.

7 They need to get their permits.
8 And they need to address both wildlife and
9 community concerns, which sometimes is called
10 "Not In My Back Yard" if it's a negative
11 concern, or whatever issues might be necessary
12 in order to secure those permits.

13 They need to find the turbines at a
14 competitive price. In the last couple of
15 years, the turbines have been sold out 100
16 percent. So finding turbines to build a
17 project can be a challenge for developers.
18 And then finally, they're going to need to, of
19 course, line up their financing for the
20 project.

21 This is a picture of a project in
22 Montana, Judith Gap. I don't know if any of

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1 you have heard of that, but it's a pretty
2 large project.

3 So transmission I think we've
4 pretty much covered from WAPA's perspective.
5 They are following the FERC regulations.

6 Intermittence is a concern that
7 comes up sometimes. In many of the utilities
8 now they're able to understand how to
9 integrate wind into their operating systems.
10 And for example, a recent project in Colorado
11 was able to be added to the utilities' service
12 operations without having to add any
13 additional backup capacity, which is sometimes
14 what you might hear. Other utilities are
15 still working through some of those
16 integration/interconnection issues. And then
17 just a couple operational issues that are sort
18 of in the forefront right now.

19 Gearbox reliability. Turbines are
20 supposed to last 20 to 30 years. There have
21 been some gearbox issues. There's a
22 collaborative right now that's working to

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1 address those issues. And there were some
2 early blade failures that had to do with
3 manufacturing -- I don't know -- some early
4 issues with how to manufacture blades. And
5 those have been fairly well resolved.

6 This is a project from Iowa. And
7 most of the projects that I have pictures of
8 are using this 1.5-MW size turbine.

9 So benefits. I put a sheet out on
10 the table. When you checked in, you may have
11 taken it. But there's a summary of some of
12 the top ten reasons that wind can benefit.
13 And one of them is that it's economically
14 competitive. It can provide a cash crop for
15 farmers and ranchers, which is a huge plus
16 when you have a depressed economy. It
17 provides direct, indirect and induced benefits
18 to local economies. So it's very beneficial.

19 They don't use water, which is a
20 constraining resource in some parts of the
21 country. They're national security
22 attributes; because the resource is

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1 indigenious, we don't have to buy it outside of
2 our borders. And it's renewable, it's
3 inexhaustible, there are no emissions, and the
4 fuel is free. So you are not going to be
5 subjected to the volatility of fossil fuels
6 over time.

7 And there's a variety of
8 applications which might not all be utilizing
9 these large wind farms. But you can look at
10 remote applications for water pumping.
11 There's community applications, which might
12 just be a single or a few turbines. And a lot
13 of these types of application would be
14 interconnected at the distribution site.

15 And finally, the environmental
16 issues. Typically what we talk about are
17 acoustics, aesthetics and wildlife. From the
18 perspective of acoustics issues, the Europeans
19 have really worked to address this, because
20 their projects are close to where the people
21 live.

22 So there have been international

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1 standards that have been developed to push the
2 manufacturers to design their turbines so that
3 they are less noisy. And because it's a
4 global market, their turbines are sold into
5 our market. So it really is not an issue.

6 The aesthetics is more of a "beauty
7 is in the eye of the beholder" kind of
8 perspective. If you don't like it, you know,
9 you don't like it. If you're not averse to
10 it, it may look like sculpture to you.

11 And we've had some property-value
12 analyses that have been done since some people
13 suggested early on that wind farms might
14 decrease their property values. And in fact,
15 that hasn't been the case. And it's actually
16 contributed to other positive benefits, like
17 bringing in tourism.

18 And then on the wildlife issue,
19 birds, bats and habitat. The bird impact
20 issue started with some of the early
21 developments in California, and it was really
22 focused on raptors. And a lot of work has

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1 been done in the ten-plus years since those
2 early projects were built, and we now have a
3 very good understanding of how to assess sites
4 before they're built and come up with -- and
5 we have strategies to avoid, minimize and
6 mitigate for bird-related impacts.

7 There's a tremendous amount of
8 resources out there. There's a lot of
9 research, peer-reviewed research, now that
10 helps us understand what needs to be done.
11 And so it's up to the developers to use that
12 information and then micro-site within the
13 context of their development where they put
14 the wind turbines to minimize the impacts to
15 birds.

16 Bats is a newer issue that came up
17 in the 2003-2004 time frame, with impacts in
18 West Virginia and Pennsylvania, in a forested
19 environment. And initially, we thought that
20 it was kind of a localized issue; we've now
21 found that some bats are having problems in at
22 least one or more sites in Canada and also in

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1 Germany.

2 So as a result of some of the early
3 work that was done on the birds issue, the
4 stakeholders very quickly got together to form
5 a collaborative to do some aggressive research
6 to understand why bats are having problems
7 with wind turbines in some localized areas and
8 then, what can we do to reduce those impacts
9 and come up with strategies to keep bats away.

10 So we have deterrent studies that are going
11 on, and other things.

12 And then the last wildlife issue is
13 a habitat issue. This is more of a proactive
14 research area to try to understand whether
15 wind farms might impact certain species, for
16 example, lesser and greater prairie chicken in
17 tall grass prairie lands, from a demographic
18 or a genetic dispersal perspective. So we're
19 doing a very extensive study to try to
20 understand what those impacts might be before
21 wind is really deployed in those environments.

22 And then the last thing that I

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1 would say is that we have a really significant
2 stakeholder involvement now in this wildlife
3 issue. It involves states, federal
4 government, non-government organizations like
5 the Nature Conservancy, Audubon Society,
6 Sierra Club. And they're all working together
7 to try to come to solutions.

8 So there are a number of resources
9 that are out there that we've put out as a
10 result of all this research that's been going
11 on. The first one on the left address metrics
12 and methods for looking at diurnal daytime
13 species. And the document on the far right is
14 a recent publication to address, to explain
15 the tools that are available and strategies
16 for looking at nocturnal species, not only
17 bats but nighttime birds. And then there's
18 also a permitting document that is very
19 useful, has a lot of information.

20 So that's all I have tonight, and I
21 was just wondering if anybody had any
22 questions on what I presented. Okay.

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1 MR. BINA: Two things -- one
2 positive, and then one recommendation. Thank
3 you for using the word "farm" and "wind farm."

4 We understand a power plant is a power plant;
5 a dam is a dam. Wind energy development -- I
6 mean I don't know what that -- thanks for
7 using the word "farm." Thank you very much.

8 Regarding your graphic of the maps
9 with the land use, that was not helpful. And
10 it's just like oil companies producing the
11 same kind of map about the impacts of oil
12 drilling on Anwar. I mean, it -- just very
13 specific dimensions of a drilling platform,
14 when everybody knows the impact goes way
15 beyond that.

16 So I think it would be helpful to
17 us to see actual aerial shots of wind farm
18 territory in Barnes County, Stutsman County,
19 Ransom County -- I don't care where, you know,
20 Burleigh County. That would be much more
21 realistic and helpful for me as a consumer of
22 this information. Thank you.

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1 MS. SINCLAIR: Okay.

2 Yes, sir?

3 MALE VOICE: I have a question.
4 You talked about a 1.5 MW turbine. Is that a
5 specific wind speed, or is it just when the
6 blades are turning?

7 MS. SINCLAIR: No, it varies.
8 It'll be -- the turbines can be deployed in
9 various wind regimes, so you could have --
10 it's just the capacity of the -- it's the
11 average capacity of the turbines that are
12 being designed -- well, that were being
13 designed. Now, they're getting a little bit
14 larger.

15 Does that answer your question?

16 MALE VOICE: No. I wondered
17 where --

18 MR. HAYSE: Ed's got an answer for
19 him.

20 MR. WEBER: I can answer that.

21 MR. HAYSE: Before you do, could we
22 please repeat the question, or have you come

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1 forward to a microphone because we're trying
2 to capture all the questions that are asked.
3 And if we can't hear it well enough, then we
4 can't get it recorded into the transcripts.

5 MR. WEBER: My name's Ed Weber.
6 I'm transmission planning manager. I work for
7 Western Area Power. The question was is the
8 1.5 MW turbine, is that the output of the
9 turbine when the wind -- when it first starts
10 turning.

11 MS. SINCLAIR: No.

12 MR. WEBER: The answer's no. The
13 wind -- the 1.5s, they typically don't start
14 turning until the wind speed reaches a certain
15 amount, and that's usually around ten to 12,
16 13 miles per hour. The new low-speed ones now
17 are going to start at about six or seven miles
18 per hour, and that's the real benefit. But
19 even at those low speeds at, say, 13 miles per
20 hour, as Karin said, the capacity or the
21 energy output ramps up as a cube of the wind
22 speed.

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1 So if you're just at ten miles per
2 hour, you're only going to get a third of the
3 output of the generator, for example. But as
4 the wind speed doubles or triples, it doesn't
5 take very long for you to get up to the
6 maximum of 1.5 MW. And that typically happens
7 around 16 to 20 miles per hour. It depends on
8 the manufacturer and depends on their gearbox.

9 But that's kind of a rule of thumb is if
10 you've got 20 mile-per-hour wind you're going
11 to get full output at your wind plant.

12 MS. SINCLAIR: Go ahead.

13 MR. TOMAC: Thank you. I noticed,
14 Karin -- can you back up one slide, or two?

15 MS. SINCLAIR: (Complying.)

16 MR. TOMAC: Yes, right there.
17 Actually, that one there. And what -- I've
18 noticed that none of the three speakers
19 addressed the whooping crane, which is
20 obviously a big issue in this part of the
21 country. And I'm, I guess, concerned. I'd
22 like to hear your comments on that because of

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1 the whooping crane corridor and how that
2 impacts that.

3 I mean, I understand your
4 organization is doing bat studies. Are you
5 doing anything around the whooping crane
6 habitat?

7 And for, Lloyd, if you would
8 comment, too, on the comment -- on the
9 question that was asked previously. It was
10 almost like it was the EIS is limited to
11 grasslands and wetlands. And it really isn't;
12 it's much broader than that. And so if either
13 of the other of you two would want to comment
14 on that, I'd appreciate that.

15 MS. SINCLAIR: I can comment on the
16 first one, which has to do with the whooping
17 crane. Are we doing any study in that area?
18 To my knowledge, we are not at this point. We
19 have a pretty extensive list of near-term
20 research priorities, but we're always willing
21 to modify those projects if there's something
22 that we feel is more important. And if there

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1 are regional-related issues that we can help
2 with, we would be willing to entertain those.

3 MR. STAS: In some of our one-by-
4 one projects we have gotten into formal
5 consultation on the whooping crane with the
6 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service. We have had
7 meetings with Henry Maddox, director of
8 ecological services, supervises the states up
9 here, the Dakotas, Montana. And we will be
10 working on this issue on the programmatic
11 basis, trying to find the best possible way to
12 protect the whooping crane.

13 We don't want any takes on those;
14 there's not a lot of them, couple hundred of
15 them -- and also move forward with wind
16 development. And I'll let my colleague Lloyd
17 say anything more about that.

18 MR. JONES: We'll be needing to
19 looking at the whooping crane issue in regards
20 to what we're evaluating in terms of allowing
21 wind on wet or grass easements. That will be
22 one of all the things that we'll have to look

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1 at and evaluate. And we'll be doing a formal,
2 internal review on that whooping crane, but to
3 your comment, Steve, about the sideboard, so
4 to speak, about this EIS -- this is not a
5 comprehensive wildlife review of wind on the
6 prairies. It is not that.

7 From the Fish & Wildlife
8 perspective, on this EIS, it is simply
9 limited, restricted, sideboarded to the
10 wetland and grassland easement program of the
11 Fish & Wildlife Service. There are bigger,
12 broader issues that deal with endangered
13 species, whooping cranes, other migratory
14 birds, all kinds of other things, but we are
15 going to be -- now, from WAPA's standpoint,
16 Nick just mentioned, he is -- that part of the
17 EIS process will be reviewing impacts to
18 migratory birds and endangered species as
19 well. But I want to point out that for the
20 Fish & Wildlife Service, we're just looking at
21 the wetland easement component.

22 MR. TOMAC: So my follow-up

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1 question to that then, Lloyd, is does that
2 mean that we will have to do a separate EIS
3 for the whooping crane because it's not
4 included in this programmatic?

5 MR. JONES: Yes. Again, if a
6 project is built on the landscape, for
7 example, that does not include a Fish &
8 Wildlife Service easement, and there is a
9 federal nexus through working with WAPA or
10 receiving federal funding or whatever, yes,
11 there would have to be a formal review of that
12 endangered species issue potentially an
13 environmental -- not necessarily, but
14 potentially an environmental impact statement
15 done.

16 This process won't deal with that
17 because easements are not involved. Now, if
18 easements are involved, then this will help
19 then because we will be reviewing all of the
20 issues associated with those easements.

21 Does that help?

22 MR. STAS: Let me say something

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1 about that also. One of the goals is to try,
2 to the extent we can, let folks know where
3 this is going to be a significant issue.
4 Lloyd mentioned an EIS. In other words, if we
5 can identify where the whooping crane is going
6 to be a significant issue ahead of time, that
7 will help the people that are planning.

8 And to the extent we can, that's
9 our goal to do that, so we don't have to do --
10 but if somebody goes there and said, Okay,
11 this -- you're here; that's significant, they
12 can go forward, but then they have to know
13 that they're going to hook into a federal
14 nexus. There's going to be environmental
15 impact statement because impacts are
16 significant to the whooping crane.

17 But what we'd like to do is try to
18 identify and say, Okay, these are areas that
19 we know, to the extent we can, based on
20 current studies' information to let folks know
21 that this is likely to generate a significant
22 issue with endangered species, not just the

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1 whooping crane but any others that we may have
2 to deal with. But that's the big one for the
3 wind programs.

4 MS. SINCLAIR: One more question.

5 MR. IRON EYES: Hello. Thank you
6 guys for coming. My name is Chase Iron Eyes.
7 I'm from Standing Rock. I had a couple of
8 questions. One is the 20 percent by 2030,
9 what is the source of that figure. Is that a
10 policy statement or wishful thinking or
11 executive order or something like that?

12 A second question had to do with
13 transmission capacity. What is WAPA's
14 transmission capacity maybe in terms of either
15 gigawatts or megawatts or something like that,
16 and is there plans to increase that capacity?

17 MS. SINCLAIR: All right. For the
18 20 percent by 2030, there was -- the
19 President's State of the Union address
20 suggested that it was a potential, you know,
21 that he really thought that that was something
22 that could happen. And so as a result of that

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1 there was an analysis done.

2 I'm not really sure if I have the
3 web page, but I can get that for you for the
4 report which was an extensive 18-months' study
5 that looked at all of the potential issues
6 that might have to be resolved in order for
7 that to occur, for those goals to be met. And
8 so that report was published in July, I
9 believe, of this year, so it's available and I
10 can get you that source.

11 And then, I'll let you --

12 MR. STAS: I'm going to defer back
13 to Ed Weber again on what's available, and
14 keep in mind the website I refer to talks
15 about the interconnection process in the queue
16 and so it's first in time on the studies. And
17 each one can subsequently affect what's
18 available as these are going on.

19 And I'll let Ed take it from there.

20 MR. WEBER: Well, thanks, Nick, I
21 think.

22 That's a difficult question because

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1 every transmission facility that Western has
2 had a different rating, a capacity factor if
3 you will. Right now in -- our transmission
4 system that interconnects with the rest of the
5 grid, we here in North Dakota are net
6 exporters of energy and so we're currently
7 exporting out of the state to load centers
8 throughout the Upper Midwest.

9 That capacity is right about 2,000
10 MW. And interestingly, it's not the sum total
11 of all of the different lines that
12 interconnect; what limits the system is the
13 system itself. It's what we call system
14 stability or transient stability and that is
15 the ability of the generators to stay
16 synchronized with the rest of the grid at a
17 transfer level during major disturbances.

18 So like if we've got a high-export
19 condition and we lose one of our big 345kV
20 lines, the one coming right out across the
21 river right north of town here. That's a
22 major disturbance; we would probably trip

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1 generation, and we don't necessarily want to
2 do that. That's a bad thing to happen. So
3 when the system is stable all of the units
4 stay synchronized and stay connected when you
5 lose that big line -- okay?

6 So that sets the limit of what you
7 can transfer. Now, at any given location,
8 depending on where you're at, if you have a
9 small line you can maybe add 10 MW; if you
10 have a bigger line you could add 50; if you
11 have a 345 line you could probably add several
12 hundred MW.

13 But the question is, is the system
14 capable of delivering it across the border or
15 delivering it out of the state to the market
16 where you want to get it to? So we have not
17 ever done a calculation to say exactly what
18 each of our transmission lines is capable of
19 carrying. I can tell you what the design
20 limit is but that really doesn't answer the
21 question of what the system can withstand.

22 MR. IRON EYES: Is the 2000 MW

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1 ballpark figure, is that for total
2 transmission or is that transmission -- 2000
3 MW more, whatever we're at.

4 MR. WEBER: No. That is the total
5 export capability of the North Dakota system
6 right now. That consists of 17 lines. It's
7 made up of nine 115s, eight 230s and three
8 345s, if I did my math right. I don't know if
9 I did or not, but -- so the answer is that is
10 the total export capability right now.

11 And if you look at the generation
12 in North Dakota right now, we've got about
13 4,500 MW of generation. And different times
14 of the year, we're going to try to sell that
15 because that's baseload cold units; you have
16 to keep them running at a certain level to
17 keep them efficient.

18 So as we add more high-voltage
19 transmission lines out of the state we'll be
20 able to add more generation in-state. So
21 that's one of the keys. When we're -- when
22 Karin was saying that transmission is the key

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1 for development of wind, she's absolutely
2 correct. We're going to need to add more
3 transmission to develop more wind.

4 MR. HAYSE: Okay. What I'd like to
5 do now is actually move out from what I had
6 hoped would be primarily just sort of a
7 question period related to the particular
8 presentations that were made and move into
9 what -- into our formal public scoping
10 comments phase. Now, keep in mind that all of
11 the questions that have been asked, if there
12 was a comment associated with that, that
13 information will get captured and will be
14 considered in our scoping process.

15 So let's just review real quickly
16 how members of the public, members of various
17 nongovernmental organizations, members of
18 tribes, can provide scoping comments. First
19 off, at the scoping meeting. That's a very
20 simple way to provide comments, and we'll get
21 into some details of how to do that in just a
22 moment.

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1 Second, via the project website and
2 the URL for that is given on the screen there.

3 And basically, if you go to the website there
4 is a very simple way to get to a place on the
5 website where you can type in a comment,
6 provide some information related to who's
7 making the comment, and that will get captured
8 and considered in our scoping process.

9 Third, you can provide comments via
10 regular mail. We provided scoping comment
11 forms at the registration desk when you came
12 in. If you would like to write comments on
13 that form -- it's designed so that you can
14 fold it up -- the address is on the outside of
15 that. Once you do that you can put a stamp on
16 it, mail it to us, and then we will consider
17 those comments.

18 If you decide to send those
19 comments via mail, you know, by handwriting
20 them on a different piece of paper or
21 something -- as long as they're addressed to
22 the address that's available either on the

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1 website or on that form, we will be happy to
2 receive those comments from you and consider
3 those during our scoping process.

4 Now, regardless of which way
5 comments come to us they will all be
6 considered equal. Okay? Please note though
7 that right now the plan is that scoping
8 comments will be accepted through November 10
9 of 2008. And the reason we have to have more
10 or less a cut-off date for scoping comments is
11 because we need to take those comments,
12 evaluate what kind of things we need to
13 include in our analyses, either based upon the
14 requirements of NEPA or based upon what those
15 comments are and tell us about what people are
16 most concerned about.

17 So we've got a lot of analysis to
18 do and we need to get that going. So scoping
19 comments, we're expecting that those will be
20 received by November 10.

21 For more information about the
22 project you can visit that project website or

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1 -- and this information is also provided on
2 the website -- you could directly contact one
3 of the federal agency representatives for this
4 programmatic environmental impact statement.
5 That would either be Nick Stas if you're
6 interested in contacting Western Area Power
7 administration or Michael Spratt from the U.S.
8 Fish and Wildlife Service if you're interested
9 in gathering more information about the EIS
10 process or providing your concerns directly to
11 those individuals or agencies.

12 Okay. So as far as providing oral
13 comments tonight, as people registered at the
14 desk, they were asked whether they were
15 interested in speaking or providing oral
16 comments tonight or not. Now, if you signed
17 up that you were interested in providing
18 comments, we made a note of that. And I have
19 a list of those and we will call those people
20 up in the order in which they registered to
21 speak.

22 Now, if you decided that you did

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1 not want to speak but you've changed your mind
2 at this point and you would like to provide a
3 comment at the meeting, we will be happy to
4 accept those comments. So once the people
5 that registered to speak have been called up,
6 then I will open it up to the audience and
7 basically, in the order that I see hands or
8 whatever come up, we will invite you to the
9 microphone to provide those oral comments.

10 You should keep in mind that we are
11 making a recording. We're basically recording
12 the comments that we receive tonight so that
13 we can prepare an accurate transcript of those
14 comments; we can capture the comments just as
15 they were made so that we can consider them
16 fully when we decide what we're going to
17 evaluate further in the environmental impact
18 statement.

19 Now, for making an oral comment
20 tonight, you will be invited to come up to the
21 microphone or we can pass the microphone to
22 you if we need to do that. I would like you

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1 to state your name and your affiliation, if
2 there is one -- if you're here representing an
3 organization of some type. Keep your comments
4 as brief as you can, please, and that's so we
5 can allow time for everybody to make comments
6 here tonight.

7 We would appreciate it if you could
8 limit the comments to the scope of the
9 programmatic EIS. And just to review for you
10 then, that means that we're looking at wind
11 energy development, or the potential impacts
12 of wind energy development, as it relates to
13 developing a program for Western to look at
14 those interconnections that will occur to
15 their transmission grid or for the Fish and
16 Wildlife Service to evaluate requests to
17 develop wind energy projects that will affect
18 U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service wetland or
19 grassland easements. Okay?

20 All right. If you have written
21 comments -- written copies of your remarks
22 that you would like to leave with us, please

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1 provide those to me or to one of the other
2 staff members who has one of the programmatic
3 EIS badges, and we will be happy to take that.

4 And the transcript that is going to be
5 prepared from these scoping comments will be
6 posted on the public website, so please keep
7 that in mind as you make your comments as
8 well.

9 And I think that's the last slide,
10 so find the list here -- okay.

11 So the first speaker that, or the
12 first commenter that requested to speak is
13 Steve Tomac. So if you would please remember
14 to state your name and your affiliation.
15 Thank you.

16 MR. TOMAC: Sure. Thank you.

17 For the record, my name is Steve
18 Tomac. I work for Basin Electric. I also
19 ranch about 30 miles southwest of here, so I
20 have a farming and ranching interest. Just
21 for the record, too, you know I'm not sure
22 that everybody here understands the

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1 significance that Basin Electric has within
2 the region. We are a power generator and
3 transmitter of electrical power.

4 We serve nine states. We are
5 actually owned by 126 rural electric
6 cooperatives in those nine states and we serve
7 2.6 million people. Most of those are farmers
8 and ranchers within those nine states, just so
9 you have a flavor of really what we do.

10 Up to this point, because we're a
11 cooperative, we really haven't had the
12 opportunity to develop our own wind farms,
13 largely because the production tax credits
14 have been focused at those for-profit
15 companies that can develop that and use a PTC
16 or production tax credit. We have, we
17 believe, found a way to utilize that and so we
18 are now in the process of developing a wind
19 farm in North Dakota in the Minot area and one
20 in South Dakota of an efficient size. At
21 least we hope it is.

22 Up to this point we have bought

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1 most of our energy from wind farms from FPL
2 because they could utilize the production tax
3 credits and we couldn't. And so with that
4 understanding we do have some concerns about
5 that.

6 But first of all, I'd like to
7 compliment both WAPA and the U.S. Fish and
8 Wildlife Service for holding these
9 programmatic hearings. We think that if done
10 properly and correctly, we think this could be
11 really beneficial to all; it could speed the
12 process and it could move the process along.
13 Because we at Basin, as the rest of the United
14 States, are in a -- starting to see that we're
15 going to run out of electrical generation in
16 the near future.

17 And within Basis alone we estimate
18 that the increase for energy in the next ten
19 years is going to increase by 2,000 MW. And
20 that's a pretty significant load to carry and
21 to build and develop. Wind energy is a
22 critical part of that. And so what we do

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1 here, and whether or not we can develop wind
2 or can't, or what circumstances, how we
3 develop wind is very important to Basin
4 Electric.

5 I would say, with respect to the
6 scoping hearings -- so I guess my point is
7 here we will need additional energy in the
8 very near future and wind is an important part
9 of that, partially because of the standard
10 that our own members have imposed upon us.

11 Our members, the 126 rural electric
12 cooperatives in those nine states, have told
13 us, We want you to generate 10 percent of your
14 portfolio -- 10 percent of your portfolio
15 should be renewable energy by '10, 2010. So
16 we have a 10 by 10. And that's a self-imposed
17 standard.

18 But we also have standards,
19 different and varying standards, within the
20 nine states that we serve. Some are mandatory
21 and some are voluntary but they range from 15
22 by 2015 to 20 by '20 and some are mandatory

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1 and some are voluntary, so there's an
2 additional motivation and requirement, if you
3 will, to develop wind energy. So that's why
4 this is important and I really applaud both
5 WAPA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife for trying
6 to find a programmatic way of approaching
7 this.

8 Having said that, specifically on
9 locations I think there are a couple points
10 that we hope that will be considered when we
11 talk about locations. And while I understand
12 that we're not talking about the specific
13 tower locations, but in general we all have to
14 recognize that there are three locations for
15 citing of any wind farm.

16 One of those is it's got to be in a
17 location where the wind resource is good. And
18 specifically to the gentleman's question a
19 little bit earlier about specific citing of
20 wind towers, we understand that there will
21 have to be a specific EA for those cites, but
22 the value of the wind resource is virtually

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1 dependent upon the location of that wind
2 tower.

3 Whether or not you move that a
4 quarter mile or a mile this way or that way
5 could affect the economics of that particular
6 wind tower. And so the wind resource -- the
7 location for the wind resource is very
8 important.

9 Number two, the transmission
10 location. Obviously, and while I'm not sure
11 it was mentioned specifically tonight, we're
12 aware that there's some issues with migratory
13 birds and power lines. And so the fewer
14 transmission lines that we have to rebuild or
15 build the better off and more economical that
16 it becomes.

17 So it's very important and
18 imperative that we're able to locate wind
19 farms as close to transmission lines as
20 possible. It really makes no sense to locate
21 a wind farm outside of an area with good
22 transmission because you have to build a

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1 transmission back to the transmission line
2 anyway. And so it just makes a lot of sense
3 to us to try and put the wind farms near the
4 transmission line because you don't create
5 another hazard of a transmission line.

6 And number three, of course, is the
7 markets which isn't as big of an issue to
8 Basin Electric because we are member-owned, a
9 cooperative, and so we're only developing wind
10 to serve our own members. We have, in effect,
11 in a joint partnership with WAPA, our own
12 transmission for the most part. So I would
13 start with those comments.

14 Number two, I think, and this
15 speaks more to the scoping hearing and
16 probably the input that you want, it's very
17 important that the programmatic EIS doesn't
18 become so burdensome that it discourages those
19 that trip the trigger, the federal connection
20 trigger that Basin trips, and triggers a NEPA
21 process from doing the wind projects.

22 What I'm saying is Basin Electric,

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1 through a federal connection, and through our
2 application for funding through our U.S., is
3 now required to do a formal EIS because of the
4 cooperating agencies with Fish and Wildlife.
5 So we have to do that and so let's not make
6 the standards for this programmatic EIS so
7 high that those of us that have to go through
8 that process, it becomes so burdensome that we
9 don't do it.

10 On the other hand, if you're a
11 private developer and you're not seeking
12 federal funding -- federal financing, you
13 don't have to go through this EIS process
14 unless you're doing an interconnect with that
15 and then it's only -- if I understand the
16 process right, it's only to the point of the
17 interconnection that you have to make.

18 For example, the power line and
19 wind farm in the Wilton area was developed by
20 FPL and it's my understanding that the only
21 EIS or EA that they probably had to consider
22 was the transmission line from the wind farm

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1 to the connection. And it wasn't even -- if
2 I'm incorrect in that, I hope you'll correct
3 me on that.

4 MR. STAS: Yes, there was an EA
5 done that considered the whole project and the
6 interconnection. There was an environmental
7 assessment done and a consultation with Fish
8 and Wildlife on that project, on the Wilton
9 project.

10 MR. TOMAC: Thank you. I guess,
11 having understood that a little better now, I
12 would only offer this one final point, and
13 that is, if I understand the whooping crane
14 issue a little bit better now, and this does
15 not specifically cover that, I would encourage
16 the scope of this study to include as much as
17 we could, the endangered species in the area
18 because the more we can get out on the table
19 on this I think the farther ahead we all are
20 going to be.

21 If we can get this out in public
22 and talk about it so we can identify those

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1 areas that cannot be developed or that are
2 critical habitat or that are nesting areas --
3 the sooner we can come to that realization and
4 that agreement and that understanding of what
5 is totally off limits, the better off we are.

6 And so while I understand -- if I
7 understand Mr. Jones correctly a specific EIS
8 is going to have to be performed if we trip
9 that, I would hope that maybe we could expand
10 this programmatic to include enough of that,
11 as much of that as we possibly could so that
12 we could all be on notice as to what's
13 permittable and what isn't.

14 MR. STAS: Just a little bit of a
15 clarification. The EIS is required when the
16 impacts are significant. Okay? And we know
17 our program, the impacts are significant. As
18 John Hayse said, the goal is to tier with an
19 EA where you find that whatever siting issues
20 are non-significant. It's a much shorter
21 process but you're dealing with very site-
22 specific issues at that point, maybe minor

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1 location move or if there's a historical site
2 or something.

3 But if there's a take of endangered
4 species, just the way NEPA's set up,
5 automatically that kicks that into the
6 significance. So, you know, Fish and Wildlife
7 tells us that, Okay, this project is going to
8 -- is in danger or gives us an opinion, then
9 that's what kicks it.

10 And I assume that's what you meant,
11 Lloyd, about having to do the EIS. You know,
12 you get into significance; that's a part of
13 the definition of you know you're going to
14 take some whooping cranes. Well, that's
15 significant, you know.

16 So -- but I think that in my
17 opinion it's reasonable to say that this can
18 be done and still not have take on the
19 whooping crane as long as we use the best
20 information, do the best work with Fish and
21 Wildlife. They've actually put together some
22 guidelines already on what could be done on

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1 development where there's no federal
2 connection.

3 There's a group that's put together
4 some mitigation and some other things for even
5 entities that aren't even dealing with RUS or
6 WAPA. But our obligations to consult under
7 Section 7 give us an additional burden being a
8 federal agency. So I hope that clarifies it.

9
10 The EIS impacts are significant; we
11 know that it's programmatic, that everything's
12 significant. We hope to deal with the
13 significance issues, the cumulative effects
14 and everything, to the maximum extent
15 practical we can with this. And then
16 streamline it and go smoother as we get to the
17 site-specific projects.

18 And that's an ideal, I know, but as
19 we get more information we can do a better
20 job. And hopefully we'll develop, through the
21 help of Argonne and National Renewable Energy,
22 resources like the tier documents from this

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1 programmatic.

2 MR. TOMAC: Thank you.

3 MR. HAYSE: The next person signed
4 up to comment is Delwyn Groninger.

5 If I mispronounce your name I
6 apologize ahead of time.

7 MR. GRONINGER: You did a good job.

8 My name is Delwyn Groninger. I'm
9 an administrator at a school that potentially
10 is impacted by a proposed wind farm. Prior to
11 coming tonight I did draft a transcript that
12 I'm going to hand in, so bear with me in that
13 I've actually learned some new information on
14 some of the things that the speakers spoke
15 about.

16 "To whom it may concern: I am
17 writing in support of the planned wind tower
18 farm to be located approximately 18 miles
19 south of Minot, North Dakota. I represent the
20 South Prairie School District Number 70 where
21 some of the proposed wind towers will be
22 located.

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1 Our board of directors, staff and students
2 have applauded the creation of electricity by
3 means of wind energy.

4 "The environment where the proposed
5 wind tower farm is to be located should be
6 impacted very little in terms of wildlife and
7 depletion of natural resources. The towers
8 will be located, I understand, away from
9 refuges and aquatic habitats in the area.
10 With the technological advancements of wind
11 turbines, the speed at which the blades turn
12 are favorable to keeping to a minimum the
13 amount of danger to any flying birds. This
14 includes whooping cranes that may choose to
15 fly over this area.

16 "And looking at the impact this
17 wind farm may have on the education of the
18 children of South Prairie in terms of
19 generating dollars for our district, it looks
20 to be a resources that the district could very
21 well use. It will help us create an efficient
22 school facility by using energy dollars we

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1 will likely receive that ultimately helps the
2 district keep property taxes from increasing.

3 "Because our school supports this
4 wind energy development and sees very little
5 chance of danger to migratory birds like the
6 whooping crane, we ask that a programmatic
7 environmental impact statement be one that
8 moves forward very quickly.

9 "Basin Electric has met with
10 property owners and has many groups behind
11 their proposed wind tower farm. This is
12 because Basin is a good partner in our area.
13 Every fall we send out fifth and sixth graders
14 to an area habitat for eco-education
15 activities and this wind energy project in our
16 area parallels what conservationists and
17 wildlife officials teach our students about
18 becoming good stewards of the land."

19 And that is my statement.

20 I also brought with me a couple
21 other statements. The next one I'm going to
22 read is from a farmer that's currently in a

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1 combine. I think he read the forecast knowing
2 that it may rain on Sunday. His name is Larry
3 Erickson. He lives west of our school
4 district.

5 "My name is Larry Erickson. I live
6 on the same farm where I was born 78 years
7 ago. The home quarter land description is
8 Section 21-153-83 of Freedom Township in Ward
9 County. I appreciate and have protected
10 wildlife my whole life. In all these years I
11 have never seen a whooping crane in this area,
12 although I would love to have that
13 opportunity.

14 "I do feel it is ludicrous for any
15 group to inhibit wind energy advancement using
16 possible whooping crane sightings as a reason.

17 We put up hay on 40 acres where the 1000-foot
18 KXMC transmission tower is located. Only on a
19 rare occasion have I come across a duck that
20 has collided with one of the guy wires.

21 "I know there is technology that
22 exists that can put out warnings to large

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1 whooping crane flights. My greater concern,
2 more than that most rare incidents of whooping
3 crane collision with a tower, is for the
4 survival of the ducks and geese in our Pothole
5 country because of the drainage that's going
6 on.

7 "Thank you for this opportunity to
8 express my opinion on this subject."

9 And if I may, I have one more
10 letter that was given to me. This is from
11 another member of our community. Her name is
12 Marla Gasman.

13 "To whom it may concern: This
14 letter is in support of the wind towers
15 currently in consideration to be constructed
16 in the Gasman Township south of Minot, North
17 Dakota. As a board member of South Prairie
18 School I fully support this project due to the
19 financial benefits it will create for the
20 school.

21 "This is a small but growing school
22 district on the south edge of Minot. Due to

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1 the continued growth into our district our
2 patrons have recently voted to allow the
3 district to do much-needed expansion of our
4 current school building to include four new
5 classrooms and a new gymnasium. The monies
6 brought into the district from the wind towers
7 would go a long way in helping to fund this
8 \$3-1/2 million project.

9 "I also support the wind tower
10 project as a landowner in the Gasman Township.

11 My family owns a small farm and ranch just
12 south of Highway 23. At this time the project
13 includes at least two towers to be erected on
14 our property. Due to the high cost of farming
15 we are always looking for ways to diversify to
16 be able to maintain the income that comes in
17 from our business. The money that would be
18 added to our annual income from these wind
19 towers would go a long way in helping to
20 support the small family farm.

21 "Lastly, I support the wind tower
22 project as an environmentally conscious

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1 citizen of the United States. North Dakota
2 has the perfect environment for creating wind
3 energy. Our legislators' support of this type
4 of project is just common sense. Not only do
5 these projects create clean energy but they
6 also bring high-paying jobs to our great
7 state. I would hope that the approval of this
8 project would move quickly through our
9 legislature."

10 If there's any questions I'll
11 answer them, but I would like to submit these.

12 MR. HAYSE: Thank you. Our next
13 commenter is Bruce Carlson.

14 If you'll give me just a moment --

15 MR. CARLSON: Well, good evening.
16 My name is Bruce Carlson. I manage Verendrye
17 Electric Cooperative in Velva, North Dakota.
18 We serve 11,400 metering points in an eight-
19 county area around Minot.

20 Verendrye Electric is writing in
21 favor of continued new wind electrical
22 generation in the central portion of North

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1 Dakota. The cooperative's been doing wind
2 monitoring along the Missouri escarpment
3 stretching from Berthold to Butte since the
4 late 1970s and early 1980s. We have a proven,
5 excellent wind resource in our service area.

6 The joint Department of Energy
7 program included monitors originally located
8 at the old U.S. Air Force radar base site and
9 also the Prophet Mountain location. With all
10 this effort and dream of wind generation it
11 just doesn't seem right that we would not be
12 able to develop it at this time due to
13 wildlife concerns. We are not aware of any
14 bird problems with existing wind machines or
15 transmission lines in our service area.

16 As cooperatives struggle to meet
17 new electrical generation needs due to ever
18 increasing member electrical growth it's
19 obvious to us that wind energy must be part of
20 the solution. With all the worry about carbon
21 dioxide and climate change, we are uncertain
22 about the future of coal-fired electrical

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1 generation. And I don't know of anybody
2 that's in favor of more nuclear generation,
3 which leaves wind generation as a critical
4 part of our energy future, utilizing a clean,
5 renewable source.

6 Verendrye is in favor of a
7 comprehensive regionwide environmental program
8 for wind energy projects that would help move
9 forward quickly and more efficiently. We are
10 opposed to any restrictive regulations that
11 can delay or end wind energy development in
12 this region. There has to be a way for a
13 continued development of wind generation to be
14 allowed working in harmony with the U.S. Fish
15 and Wildlife while still keeping the cost of
16 electricity affordable.

17 Area farms are very interested in
18 wind energy as a cash crop with thousands of
19 acres of land already leased out in our
20 service area. Our local communities and
21 economical development corporations are very
22 excited about the prospects of new jobs and

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1 new prosperity. Area schools and political
2 subdivisions are very excited about the
3 possibility of new tax revenue and we
4 sincerely request your cooperation in moving
5 this wind projects forward.

6 And I also just will offer a number
7 of letters of support and they can be entered
8 into the transcript, I'd hope, at a later
9 time: from the Minot Area Chamber of
10 Commerce, a letter of support of wind
11 generation, the Velva Community Development
12 Corporation, McHenry County Jobs Development
13 Authority, the City of Velva, the City of
14 Minot, the Minot Area Development Corporation
15 and also from Farm Credit Services of North
16 Dakota.

17 I thank you very much for your
18 time, and let's move the project forward.

19 BY MR. HAYSE: Thank you. Our next
20 commenter is Michael Smith.

21 MR. SMITH: I'm Michael Smith. I
22 farm south of Minot and I can guarantee the

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1 wind always blows there when I want to spray
2 my crop.

3 (Laughter.)

4 MR. SMITH: And I am one of those
5 farmers that should be home on the combine; we
6 started on soybeans. But I feel it's
7 important to give my input.

8 I have seen the benefits of wind
9 energy development with the construction of
10 the first two wind towers south of Minot by
11 Basin Electric and Verendrye Electric. I was
12 clerk treasurer of Freedom Township where the
13 two wind towers are located. During the tax
14 years of 2004 through 2007 the towers have
15 been in our township. We have received over
16 \$73,500 in tax revenue from this source of
17 energy. These funds have been put to work
18 improving our township roads.

19 My involvement as a past board
20 member of the rural fire district, I have seen
21 the benefits of the added tax revenue in
22 purchasing much-needed fire equipment. As a

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1 patron of South Prairie School I am excited to
2 see the impact that the wind towers have on
3 revitalization of the school district through
4 the tax revenue from wind energy.

5 As a farmer, landowner and
6 grandparent of children that will be attending
7 South Prairie School I have seen the economic
8 benefits of these two existing wind towers and
9 look forward to the proposed wind farm south
10 of Minot. Having farmed all my life, I
11 support wind as an alternative source of
12 energy to lessen our dependence on foreign
13 oil. Continued development of wind generation
14 in this region will make our nation one step
15 closer to achieving our goal of clean energy.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. HAYSE: Thank you. Our next
18 commenter is Peter Karlsson.

19 MR. KARLSSON: Good evening. My
20 name is Pete Karlsson. I work for National
21 Wind. We're a community-based energy
22 developer based in Minneapolis. I work as a

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1 land agent for National Wind and have been
2 focused on a project called Dakota Wind which
3 is on the plateau in northeastern South Dakota
4 -- Marshall, Roberts and Day County.

5 Our business model has landowners
6 -- local landowners investing in our project,
7 and we also give landowners who sign their
8 wind rights with us a chance to use that money
9 to buy units of ownership in the local L.L.C.
10 that is Dakota Wind Energy in South Dakota.
11 So we have heavy landowner investment in our
12 project, both financially and with their land
13 rights or wind rights.

14 And many of those -- a large
15 majority of those have chosen to invest in the
16 project that they are hoping to see wind
17 towers operating on their land. To date we
18 have about 57,000 acres in this signed up and
19 under site control in this project. We're
20 hoping to have at least 64,000 which we're
21 close to and as much as 75,000 acres in route
22 to housing a 750 MW project in that area.

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1 National Wind has other projects in
2 the Dakotas; this is the one I'm most familiar
3 with and most comfortable talking to you
4 about. We seek to be cooperative. We know
5 that you have important work; you have
6 missions to carry out. We have mutual goals,
7 I believe, in trying to accomplish both
8 development of wind energy and protecting
9 habitats.

10 So when I see -- I guess a concern
11 that arose when I began looking at the data,
12 the drawings and such that were prepared for
13 this scoping meeting, the whooping crane
14 flyway caused me to be a little concerned
15 about how vague that flyway was. I'm hoping
16 that that is an issue that can be overcome
17 quickly if we can be determined to be outside
18 that flyway.

19 We have, in that 57,000 acres -- a
20 second point, a number of wetland and
21 grassland easements that were in place at the
22 time we signed those acres so we knew that we

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1 needed to work in Fish and Wildlife on
2 whatever mitigation strategies were necessary
3 and we're willing and eager to do that. So I
4 guess I'm here to say we look forward to
5 getting our project done, recognizing the
6 duties that the lead agencies have, and to
7 meet our mutual goals.

8 Thank you. And we will submit
9 something online as well.

10 MR. HAYSE: Okay. Thank you.

11 Our final registered commenter is
12 Kaya Tarham.

13 (No audible response.)

14 MR. HAYSE: Okay. No comment.

15 At this time I'd like to open the
16 floor to anyone else who wishes to provide a
17 comment as part of the scoping process. If
18 you would raise your hand and please come to
19 the microphone just at the other speakers
20 have.

21 Yes, sir?

22 MR. MURPHY: My name is Dennis

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1 Murphy. I'm kind of a purveyor of crackpot
2 ideas at times, but I have a suggestion that
3 if you do increase the transmission line
4 capacity that, rather than buy additional
5 right of way, you upgrade the towers to carry
6 more wire so that you can do their job.

7 And I have a comment for the farmer
8 from -- or the school person from South
9 Prairie. The reason the farmer's out in the
10 combine is Sunday night they might have four
11 feet of snow.

12 (Laughter.)

13 MR. HAYSE: Thank you. Anyone
14 else?

15 Going once. Going twice. All
16 right. Thank you.

17 With that -- before everybody
18 departs, I'd like to thank everyone for
19 attending our public scoping meeting tonight.

20 Your comments are very valuable to us.
21 Please remember that even if you made an oral
22 comment tonight you are still welcome to

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1 submit additional written comments via any of
2 the various mechanisms that I spoke about
3 earlier. And I will give an
4 opportunity to the representatives from
5 Western and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to
6 provide a few additional remarks.

7 MR. STAS: Just a couple quick
8 remarks: One thing I wanted to say was that
9 we have a study that was directed by Congress
10 called the Hydropower Wind Integration Study.

11 That will be coming out within a month and
12 probably sooner than that. It will be
13 announced and publicized and that information
14 will then be incorporated in our analysis in
15 this EIS.

16 The other thing is that if there's
17 other government agencies that want to
18 participate as a cooperating agency -- the
19 Fish and Wildlife and us are going to be joint
20 lead but if there's other folks that want to
21 be cooperating agencies, we still invite them
22 as there's still an opportunity. And we will

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1 be doing formal consultation with the tribal
2 governments on this project as it goes
3 forward.

4 That's all I wanted to say. And
5 thanks everyone for your comments tonight.

6 MR. HAYSE: Thanks everyone for
7 coming. Safe journeys home. And this meeting
8 is adjourned.

9 (Whereupon, at 8:30 p.m., the
10 meeting was concluded.)

11

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