

**From:** [MN\\_PUC\\_PublicAdvisor](#)  
**To:** [Staff, CAO \(PUC\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: SRDC written comments on Docket # IP7014/CN-19-486; IP7014/GS-19-620; IP7013/CN-19-408; IP7013/WS-19-619; IP7013/TL-19-621 Big Bend Wind & Red Rock Solar. If ?s, please contact Jason Walker at our office.  
**Date:** Thursday, December 17, 2020 11:04:10 AM

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**From:** Jessica Welu <JessicaW@swrdc.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, December 14, 2020 2:22 PM  
**To:** MN\_PUC\_PublicAdvisor <publicadvisor.puc@state.mn.us>  
**Cc:** Jason Walker <JasonW@swrdc.org>  
**Subject:** SRDC written comments on Docket # IP7014/CN-19-486; IP7014/GS-19-620; IP7013/CN-19-408; IP7013/WS-19-619; IP7013/TL-19-621 Big Bend Wind & Red Rock Solar. If ?s, please contact Jason Walker at our office.

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## Southwest Regional Development Commission Project Review

**Agenda Item:** 6

**Meeting Date:** December 10, 2020

**Project Name:** Red Rock Solar, LLC for a Certificate of Need for the up to 60-MW Red Rock Solar Project in Cottonwood County– MPUC Docket No. IP-7014/CN-19-486

Red Rock Solar, LLC for a Site Permit for the up to 60-MW Red Rock Solar Project in Cottonwood County– MPUC Docket No. IP-7014/GS-19-620

Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Certificate of Need for the up to 308-MW Big Bend Wind Project in Cottonwood and Watonwan Counties – MPUC Docket No. IP-7013/CN-19-408

Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Site Permit for the up to 308-MW Big Bend Wind Project in Cottonwood and Watonwan Counties – MPUC Docket No. IP-7013/WS-19-619

Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Route Permit for a 161-kV High Voltage Transmission Line in Cottonwood, Martin and Watonwan Counties – MPUC Docket No. IP-7013/TL-19-1621

### Project Description

Red Rock Solar, LLC, (Red Rock, Applicant) an affiliate of Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC, has filed with the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (Commission) separate applications for a certificate of need and a site permit for an up-to 60 MW solar energy generating system on approximately 483 acres of land in Cottonwood County. The primary components of the facility would include photovoltaic panels installed tracking rack system, electrical inverters, an electrical collection system, fencing, access roads, up to three weather stations, a project substation, and 10 storm

water drainage basins. The Red Rock Solar Project would interconnect at the existing Blue Lake-Wilmarth-Interstate Interconnection 345kV transmission line via an approximately 18 miles long 161 kV overhead transmission line. The Red Rock Solar Project is associated with the Big Bend Wind Project proposed by Big Bend Wind, LLC (Big Bend), also an affiliate of Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC. The Big Bend Wind Project is a proposed up-to 308 MW large wind energy conversion system and associated 161 kV transmission line proposed to be located in portions of Cottonwood, Martin, and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota.

The Red Rock Solar and Big Bend Wind Projects are proposed to be a hybrid wind and solar renewable energy project that would generate up to 335 MW of electricity together. The power produced by the Red Rock Solar Project would be transferred to the grid on the proposed transmission line associated with the Big Bend Wind Project. Big Bend has filed with the Commission separate applications for a certificated of need (CN-19-408), a site permit (WS-19-619), and a route permit (TL-19-621) for the Big Bend Wind Project. The Applicant has requested that the Commission order a joint regulatory review process on the applications for the Red Rock Solar and Big Bend Wind projects.

### **Staff Comments and Questions:**

- The projected footprint for this projects has shifted significantly to the south and west from their original proposal in 2017. The largest concerns seem to revolve around the proximity to the Jeffers Petroglyphs Historical Site. Some of those concerns and actions to address them are (full details in Appendix G of the Site Permit Application):
  - Shadow flicker, noise levels and the “viewshed”.
    - In response, the nearest a turbine would be to the site is 5 miles. Most parties feel this is an adequate response; however, the Lower Sioux representatives have asked for 8 miles.
  - Construction for the turbines may disturb or destroy artifacts that are underground.
    - Apex has created an Unanticipated Discoveries Plan.
  - Need for better communications and inclusion of tribal leaders in the process and surveys.
    - Apex contracted with QSI (consulting firm) to do oral histories with tribal leaders, invited stakeholders to participate in surveys, and provided monthly progress reports.
- The size of the wind turbines would be some of the largest that the region has ever seen. The turbines they are considering have an energy production range of 5.5 MW to 5.7 MW. . . almost double what other projects have been installing in Southwest Minnesota.
- Another unique feature of this project is that it would be the first large-scale wind-solar hybrid renewable energy project.
- Production tax revenue: Based on a rate of \$1.20 per MW hour produced, this project would generate between \$1,354,800 and \$1,470,000 per year based on company projections of between 1,129 and 1,225 GW hours produced per year.

**Review Time: 4 hours**

**Income to SRDC as a result of this review: \$0**

**Reviewer:** Jason Walker, Development/Energy Planner