

January 26, 2021

Suzanne Steinhauer
Environmental Review Manager
Minnesota Department of Commerce
85 7th Place East, Suite 500
St. Paul, MN 55101

Re: Walleye Wind Project
PUC Docket Number: IP7026/WS-20-384

Dear Suzanne Steinhauer:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Walleye Wind project (Project), a wind farm in Rock County, Minnesota. Regarding matters for which the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) has regulatory responsibility and other interests, the MPCA staff has the following comments for your consideration.

Section 8.4 Noise

The MPCA appreciates the modeling and noise discussion in the Site Permit Application, and does not have any concerns regarding the noise impacts of the Project on nearby sensitive receptors, at this time.

The MPCA does want the Project proposer to note, however, that there is no differentiation in the state noise rules for the application of the standards to pre-existing receptors versus those that are constructed after the turbines are in operation – the standards apply equally. Text in Table 2 (p. 10) indicates that the Project proposer acknowledges their responsibility to follow setbacks that allow for the Project to meet the state standards during design and construction, but that this doesn't hold for receptor construction after the turbines are operational.

The noise standards will still apply to any receptor in the vicinity, whether or not it predates the construction and operation of the turbines. The MPCA doesn't recommend any specific actions at this time, but wants this noted by the Project proposer. For noise related questions, please contact Fawkes Char at 651-757-2327 or Fawkes.Char@state.mn.us.

Section 8.17 Surface Water and Floodplains

The wind energy project covers a very large area that includes the presence of impaired waters, unnamed streams and many wetlands. Due to the size of the Project, it is assumed it will ultimately disturb 50 or more acres where stormwater from the construction is also likely to discharge to these waters. Therefore, the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) for the Project will require review and approval by the MPCA prior to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System/State Disposal System (NPDES/SDS) General Construction Stormwater Permit (CSW Permit) issuance. The Project will also be required to comply with current CSW Permit requirements, including additional requirements for discharges to impaired waters that are not mentioned in the Site Permit Application. Additional requirements include stabilizing temporarily or permanently unworked soils within 7 days on any portion of the site and providing temporary sediment ponds where 5 acres drain to one location. Also, the SWPPP will need to include plans for installation of redundant (double) downgradient sediment controls for disturbances within 50 feet of all surface waters, including wetlands within the site.

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The Site Permit Application does not quantify the number of new impervious surfaces resulting from the Project. The planned O&M building, new substation, gravel pad, gravel access roads and the concrete tower foundations are impervious surfaces. If these areas total 1 acre or more, plans for permanent stormwater management will be required and must be included with the SWPPP. The CSW Permit requires that infiltration be used for stormwater management unless prohibited for one of the reasons listed in the permit. Otherwise, another method of stormwater volume reduction must be utilized. Please direct questions regarding CSW Permit requirements to Roberta Getman at 507-206-2629 or Roberta.Getman@state.mn.us.

Please be aware that this letter does not constitute approval by the MPCA of any or all elements of the Project for the purpose of pending or future permit action(s) by the MPCA. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the Project proposer to secure any required permits and to comply with any requisite permit conditions. If you have any questions concerning our review of this Project, please contact me by email at karen.kromar@state.mn.us or by telephone at 651-757-2508.

Sincerely,

Karen Kromar

Karen Kromar
Project Manager
Environmental Review Unit
Resource Management and Assistance Division

KK:bt

cc: Dan Card, MPCA, St. Paul
Fawkes Char, MPCA, St. Paul
Roberta Getman, MPCA, Rochester
Randy Hukriede, MPCA, Marshall