

Appendix E

Agency Correspondence



May 8, 2020

[Address Block]

RE: Requesting Comments on an up to 303-megawatt Wind Farm in Cottonwood and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota

Dear [Name],

Big Bend Wind, LLC (“Big Bend”) and Red Rock Solar, LLC (“Red Rock”), are indirect wholly-owned subsidiaries of Apex Clean Energy Holdings, LLC (“Apex”), and are proposing to construct up to 335 megawatts (“MW”) of new renewable energy generation in Cottonwood and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota. As proposed, the renewable generation could consist of up to 303 MWs of wind (the “Wind Farm”), or a combination of wind and up to 60 MWs of solar (the “Solar Project”). In addition, Big Bend is proposing to construct a 161 kilovolt (“kV”) transmission line and associated facilities (“Transmission Line”) to support the Wind Farm and Solar Project.

Big Bend will be submitting a Site Permit Application for a Large Wind Energy Conversion System to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission (“Commission”).

The planned nameplate energy capacity for the project is up to 335 megawatts of nameplate wind energy capacity. The project’s permanent facilities will include:

- Wind turbines and related equipment;
- New gravel access roads and improvements to existing roads;
- Underground electrical collection lines;
- An operations and maintenance building (one building for the Solar Project and Wind Farm);
- A project substation facility (project substations for the Solar Project and Wind Farm that will be collocated);
- An associated 161 kV gen-tie transmission line; and
- Up to three permanent meteorological towers up to 80 meters tall.

The project’s temporary facilities will include:

- Staging/laydown areas for a temporary concrete batch plant, component deliveries, and delivery trucks;
- Crane paths to be used during construction; and
- Temporary meteorological towers.

c/o Apex Clean Energy, Inc.

8665 Hudson Blvd North, Suite 110 | Lake Elmo, MN 55042

T 612.260.6614 | F 434.220.3712

apexcleanenergy.com



The turbine locations, access roads, and electrical connections have not been finalized at this time. Table 1 provides the sections of land that Big Bend is evaluating for siting the wind energy project.

Table 1 Big Bend Wind Farm Project Location				
County Name	Township Name	Township	Range	Sections
Cottonwood	Delton	107N	35W	25-28, 33-36
	Selma	107N	34W	27-29, 31-36
	Carson	106N	35W	1-2, 10-16, 21-26, 35-36
	Midway	106N	34W	1-32, 34-36
Watonswan	Butterfield	106N	33W	3, 6-11, 15-23, 26, 28-29

The enclosed Wind Farm Project Area map depicts the area within which turbines and associated facilities may be proposed. Big Bend must obtain two approvals from the Commission to construct the proposed Wind Farm: a Certificate of Need and a Site Permit. In the Certificate of Need proceeding, the Commission determines whether a proposed wind farm project is needed and the appropriate size, configuration, and timing. If the Commission determines that the Wind Farm is needed, the Commission will then determine the area for the Wind Farm.

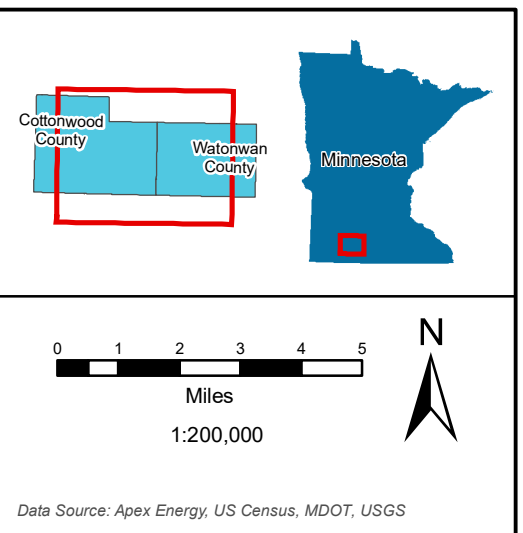
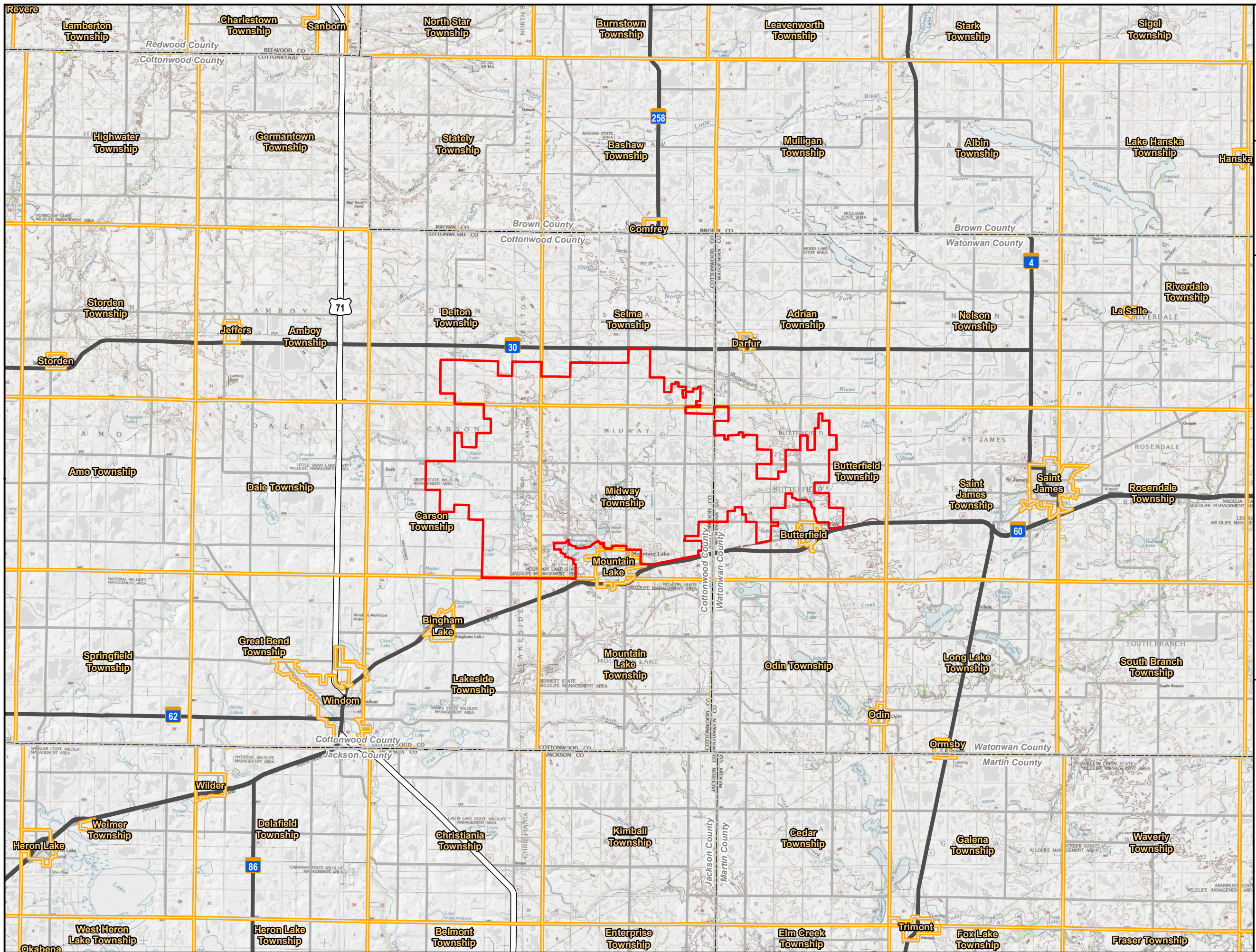
This request for comment letter is specific to the Wind Farm; you'll be receiving similar letters specific to the Solar Project and Transmission Line. To facilitate your review, we have enclosed a map that depicts the area within which turbines and associated facilities may be proposed. We welcome any comments your agency may have at this time and throughout the permit application process. Any written agency comments provided in response to this letter will be incorporated into the PUC's review process.

If you require further information or have questions regarding this matter, please contact me at (484) 364-9298 or Dylan.ikkala@apexcleanenergy.com.

Sincerely,

Dylan Ikkala
Development Manager
Apex Clean Energy

Enc. Wind Farm Project Area Map



- Project Area Boundary
- City/Township
- County Boundary

Figure 1
Project Location
Big Bend Wind Project
Cottonwood and Watonwan
Counties, Minnesota



Date: 6/4/2020 Source: Z:\Clients\A_D\Apex\Big Bend\GIS\Permitting\Fig1_BB_Project_Location.mxd

Dylan Ikkala

From: Marquardt, Shauna R <Shauna_Marquardt@fws.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 1, 2020 1:46 PM
To: Dylan Ikkala
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] RE: Transmission Line in Cottonwood, Watonwan, and Martin Counties
Attachments: Fig01_BB_Project_Location.pdf; Big Bend Wind Farm Project Notification Letters_05082020.docx; Red_Rock_Project_Area_20200518.pdf; Red Rock Solar Project Notification Letters_05192020.docx

Hi Dylan,

Because of current workload management, we are not able to provide the level of initial technical assessment that you are requesting for the three parts of this project. We now rely on available web-based tools to provide initial technical assistance. You can access the information you're looking for regarding federally listed species that could occur in your project area through our Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system (<https://ecos.fws.gov/ipac/>). Through IPaC, you will be able to enter geographic and activity details for your project to generate an Official Species List that provides a list of federally listed species and designated critical habitat that may be impacted by your project. The species list will also include any species proposed for listing and any areas proposed as critical habitat that overlap with the project area. You then can refer to our [Section 7 website](#) for guidance and [technical assistance](#), including [step-by-step instructions](#) for making effects determinations for each species that might be present. If there is no habitat for the species that IPaC indicates, then the appropriate determination is No Effect. You do not need to consult further with us for No Effect determinations, simply document the logic and conclusion for your files.

Should you determine that listed species or other federal trust resources could occur in your project area and would like to coordinate on a path forward under for ESA consultation and permitting under section 7 or section 10, you can contact me for additional assistance.

Shauna Marquardt (she/her/hers)
Assistant Field Supervisor
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office
573-239-3293

IPaC resource list

This report is a summary of the resources referred to as the project area. It is expected to be used outside of the project area. However, determining the gathering additional proposed activities.

Below is a summary of the resources

jurisdiction in the defined project area. Please read the introduction to each section that follows (Endangered Species, Migratory Birds, USFWS Facilities, and NWI Wetlands) for additional information applicable to the trust resources addressed in that section.

LOGIN.GOV SIGN IN MIGRATION

In mid-to-late December 2020, IPaC will change its sign-in process to use Login.gov. At that time, you will need an account with Login.gov with the same email address you are currently using to log into IPaC. This change includes Google login users.

ECOS applications other than IPaC have already switched to Login.gov. Until IPaC moves to Login.gov in December, you will need to sign in to both platforms separately.

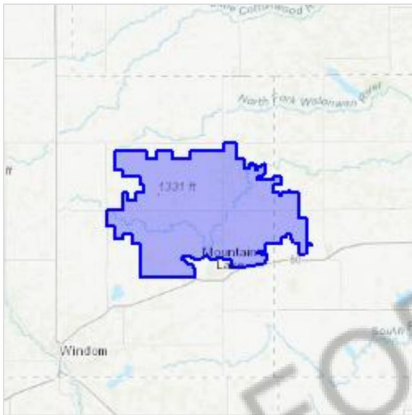


collectively known or that occur in the project area. It also requires the timing of

office(s) with

Location

Cottonwood and Watonwan counties, Minnesota



Local office

Minnesota-Wisconsin Ecological Services Field Office

☎ (952) 252-0092

📅 (952) 646-2873

MAILING ADDRESS

4101 American Blvd E
Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

PHYSICAL ADDRESS

4101 American Blvd E

-

Bloomington, MN 55425-1665

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/Endangered/section7/s7process/step1.html>

Endangered species

This resource list is for informational purposes only and does not constitute an analysis of project level impacts.

The primary information used to generate this list is the known or expected range of each species. Additional areas of influence (AOI) for species are also considered. An AOI includes areas outside of the species range if the species could be indirectly affected by activities in that area (e.g., placing a dam upstream of a fish population, even if that fish does not occur at the dam site, may indirectly impact the species by reducing or eliminating water flow downstream). Because species can move, and site conditions can change, the species on this list are not guaranteed to be found on or near the project area. To fully determine any potential effects to species, additional site-specific and project-specific information is often required.

Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act **requires** Federal agencies to "request of the Secretary information whether any species which is listed or proposed to be listed may be present in the area of such proposed action" for any project that is conducted, permitted, funded, or licensed by any Federal agency. A letter from the local office and a species list which fulfills this requirement can **only** be obtained by requesting an official species list from either the Regulatory Review section in IPaC (see directions below) or from the local field office directly.

For project evaluations that require USFWS concurrence/review, please return to the IPaC website and request an official species list by doing the following:

1. Draw the project location and click CONTINUE.
2. Click DEFINE PROJECT.
3. Log in (if directed to do so).
4. Provide a name and description for your project.
5. Click REQUEST SPECIES LIST.

Listed species¹ and their critical habitats are managed by the [Ecological Services Program](#) of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the fisheries division of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA Fisheries²).

Species and critical habitats under the sole responsibility of NOAA Fisheries are **not** shown on this list. Please contact [NOAA Fisheries](#) for [species under their jurisdiction](#).

1. Species listed under the [Endangered Species Act](#) are threatened or endangered; IPaC also shows species that are candidates, or proposed, for listing. See the [listing status page](#) for more information.
2. [NOAA Fisheries](#), also known as the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), is an office of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration within the Department of Commerce.

The following species are potentially affected by activities in this location:

Mammals

NAME	STATUS
Northern Long-eared Bat <i>Myotis septentrionalis</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/9045	Threatened

Flowering Plants

NAME	STATUS
Prairie Bush-clover <i>Lespedeza leptostachya</i> No critical habitat has been designated for this species. https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp/species/4458	Threatened