

PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING - 09-553

Webex - August 6, 2025 - 6:00 p.m.

BEFORE THE MINNESOTA PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

**In the Matter of the Site Permit for Elm Creek Wind II,
LLC, 150 MW Project in Martin and Jackson Counties**

MPUC DOCKET NO. IP-6728/WS-09-553

**Meeting held remotely via:
Webex and Telephone**

August 6, 2025

COURT REPORTER: Christine Simons, RMR, RPR

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1 MR. SAM LOBBY: Thanks for showing up
2 today, folks. I just wanted to, yeah, cover our
3 meeting tonight, public information meetings on the
4 Elm Creek Wind Project, Docket Number 09-553. I am
5 Sam Lobby with the Minnesota Public Utilities
6 Commission. I'm an energy planner, and my contact
7 information is below.

8 So just a quick introduction here, again,
9 I'm Sam Lobby. I will be covering a quick summary
10 of the review process. Then, next, Luke with
11 Avangrid will give a description of the proposed
12 project; then Rich Davis, also with the PUC, will
13 discuss the environmental review process; and then
14 we'll cover questions and comments.

15 So just a real quick background, I won't
16 dig too deep into this since Luke is going to give
17 you more information on the project. The Elm Creek
18 Wind II project was originally granted a permit on
19 February 25th of 2010. Then, on April 1st of 2025,
20 Elm Creek Wind II submitted an application to
21 repower the Elm Creek Wind facility and amend their
22 site permit to increase the facility's efficiency
23 and energy output, as well as to extend the permit
24 term and operational life of the facility.

25 The proposed changes will consist of

1 retrofitting existing equipment, and will not
2 include changes to the turbine locations, the MET
3 tower, or the substation. Requesting changes
4 include -- requested changes include replacing
5 rotors, replacing turbine nacelles and the interior
6 elements, increasing the hub height of existing
7 turbines from 78 to 86 meters, increasing tip height
8 of existing turbines from 127.5 to 146 meters,
9 adjust turbine output for existing turbines from 2.4
10 to 2.2 megawatts, and decrease the total nameplate
11 capacity below the permitted 150 megawatts.

12 So the main considerations for the
13 Commission are under Minnesota Statute 216F.03, the
14 siting of large wind energy conversion system must
15 be done in an orderly manner compatible with
16 environmental preservation, sustainable development,
17 and the efficient use of resources.

18 Minnesota Rule 7854.1300 Subp. 2 provides
19 that the Commission may amend a site permit for a
20 large wind energy conversion system at any time if
21 the Commission has good cause to do so. And under
22 Minnesota Statute 216F.04, the Commission may place
23 conditions in a permit, and may deny, modify,
24 suspend, or revoke a permit.

25 So just a real quick review of the

1 timeline, we have -- the filing came in on April 1st
2 of this year. Rich with, formerly, EERA provided
3 comments on application completeness and a proposed
4 draft site permit on June 20th. Then, yesterday we
5 had our in-person public information meeting in
6 Jackson. Today is our virtual meeting.

7 And the comment period for this will
8 close on August 20th, so there's still plenty of
9 time to get in written comments. Then, on September
10 5th, Rich will submit comments on the site permit
11 amendment, and the Commission will consider the site
12 permit sometime at the end of the year, quarter 4 of
13 2025.

14 So just real quick, there's my contact
15 information.

16 And next up is Luke with the company, and
17 you can just tell me when to click ahead.

18 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: Yeah, perfect.
19 Thank you, Sam.

20 And, yeah, good evening. My name is Luke
21 Schwitzer. I am a lead developer with Avangrid
22 Power. We appreciate the chance to highlight some
23 of our plans at the Elm Creek II wind farm.

24 Yeah, next slide. Thank you.

25 So before we get into the project

1 details, I just want to provide a company overview
2 for folks that might be unfamiliar. So Avangrid
3 Power, we are the third largest renewable energy
4 owner and operator in the States. With that, it
5 truly represents a presence of wind and solar
6 projects nationwide across 22 different states.

7 And narrowing in closer to the Midwest in
8 particular, you know, it's really a place where we
9 have specifically a large presence in wind farms.
10 So you can see numbers in the lower left. Some of
11 them in the -- Illinois, in particular, might be
12 outdated as we've had newer projects go live. But,
13 yeah, basically the Midwest is home to a lot of wind
14 and has been for a long time with the company.

15 Yeah, you can hit the next slide.

16 And just zooming in further, right, to
17 Jackson and Martin Counties where Elm Creek II is
18 located. I just wanted to highlight that Avangrid
19 has since been active in these communities for a
20 long time, going back more than 20 years at this
21 point.

22 So you can see, just at a glance for
23 folks giving context to these projects in the
24 region, we have Elm Creek II located there in
25 yellow, Elm Creek I is in blue, and Trimont to the

1 north, with some facts here highlighted in the
2 bullet points. So the COD dates that are listed
3 stands for the commercial operation dates. That's
4 when these projects were all respectively placed in
5 service. So you can see Trimont was our first in
6 the region, going live in 2005, and, in fact, this
7 was also repowered in 20- -- or I'm sorry, five
8 years ago, 2020. Elm Creek I followed in 2008, and,
9 of course, talking about Elm Creek II tonight,
10 initially went live in 2010.

11 Next slide.

12 So now getting into some of the specifics
13 of what, you know, we're planning and working
14 towards out at Elm Creek II. You know, when we talk
15 about repowering in general, it's really a -- kind
16 of a catchall term that can mean many different
17 things depending on the particular site. You know,
18 whatever the particular company's plans are.
19 Regardless of what the specifics look like, it's
20 really just -- it's the process of taking existing
21 equipment that's out there and operating, and
22 retrofitting it with newer, more modernized, more
23 efficient equipment.

24 And so what that means for Avangrid at
25 Elm Creek II specifically is replacing the turbine

1 blades themselves and replacing the nacelles. So
2 the nacelle is that piece highlighted in the photo
3 there. It sits up on top of the tower, and it
4 houses your generator for each turbine. It has the
5 drivetrain elements, so on and so forth.

6 So, again, the scope of work that we're
7 anticipating is replacing that nacelle and
8 components that come with it, as well as the blades
9 themselves, and I'll touch on some of those details
10 here in a little bit.

11 But I just wanted to highlight, you know,
12 what this does not include is, you know, we are not
13 moving any turbine locations. With a small caveat,
14 we're not really, you know, removing the towers
15 themselves. The roads, O&M building, substation
16 that's out there, transmission lines, they'll all
17 remain and operate as they exist today.

18 So just to come back to the tower piece,
19 my caveat is in order to make this new equipment
20 work with the towers that are out there and the
21 existing Mitsubishi turbines that exist out there,
22 there is a tower adaptor section that will have to
23 be installed on top of the existing towers.

24 Once we remove the old nacelle, we'll
25 install the tower adaptor. It's about, we

1 anticipate, 17 feet tall, and that's really just to
2 make, you know, the components of the existing tower
3 work with the components of the incoming nacelle and
4 details, such as, you know, the bolt pattern, just
5 logistically how to make those two things work. So
6 maybe a lot of detail in there, but all that to say,
7 you know, we are not, you know, tearing down the
8 tower. We're not proposing that. It's just to make
9 the project work.

10 So those are kind of the details at a
11 glance. I think, you know, it's important to touch
12 on just what this might look like from a temporary
13 construction impact side of things, right? As you
14 might imagine, the repower construction of this is
15 going to look quite a bit different than maybe it
16 would have, right, for greenfield original
17 developments. But at the same time, you know, it's
18 a large energy production site. It will not be an
19 insignificant, you know, construction effort.

20 So some of the things to highlight, some
21 of the biggest impacts will be right away, you know,
22 crane paths, right? We will be having to walk large
23 all-terrain cranes across the land to not just take
24 down the existing nacelles and blades, but also,
25 obviously, install the incoming retrofitted

1 equipment.

2 With that, we'll also need -- if you can
3 picture any of your access roads delivering this
4 equipment, we'll need to widen any of those
5 90-degree turning radius areas in order to
6 facilitate the much larger blade swing radius when
7 we're bringing in the new and, also, you know,
8 removing the old equipment as well.

9 Also highlighted here are collector lines
10 section upgrades. So the collector lines, if folks
11 aren't familiar, you know, that's the power lines
12 that are taking power generated from the turbines
13 and routing it to our collector substation.

14 And we have ran many engineering studies
15 on a lot of this, and we fully anticipate that a lot
16 of the existing collector section runs will be able
17 to work under a repowered scenario. However, there
18 are likely at least a few sections that may need to
19 be supplemented. So we may need to trench in new
20 collector line sections, but, again, in the
21 comparison of a greenfield construction effort, it
22 will not look anything on par with that sort of
23 effort.

24 And then lastly, and probably maybe most
25 important, talking about our repower is the area

1 that we'll need for laydown and staging yards. So,
2 you know, this is the area just logistically to make
3 this work from a construction standpoint. We need a
4 lot of space to bring down the old equipment, store
5 it, you know, manage it, do what we need to do with
6 it, and also bring in the new and store it and ready
7 for installation. And, again, just construction
8 vehicles and temporary field offices, all important
9 components, which would really comprise those
10 laydown staging areas as well.

11 Yeah, next slide.

12 So getting into more of the specifics, as
13 much of the specifics as we can at this point,
14 there's really -- this is kind of the part of the
15 planning process where there's truly a lot of moving
16 parts. And I want to caveat that any of the final
17 details, really, that we're working towards and
18 understanding what our equipment selection is going
19 to be, what our schedule's going to be, it's all
20 very much subject to change at this point.

21 But at the same time, we want to, you
22 know, be transparent and share, you know, the best
23 data that we have available today. So that's what
24 this is, and of course, you know, as things are
25 finalized, you know, we'll be communicating those

1 changes and those final details.

2 But with that, this is the snapshot of
3 where we're at today. So what we are proposing,
4 again, is replacing these blades, which today
5 exist on a Mitsubishi model, and they're 95-meter
6 blades. And we propose increasing that up to
7 120-meter blades.

8 And then if you can picture -- so the tip
9 height is, if you could picture the turbine blade at
10 its highest point of rotation, is that tip height,
11 and we're proposing changing that tip height from
12 currently existing at 418 feet high to 480 feet
13 high. Adjusting the turbine output, so each turbine
14 generator right now, again, the Mitsubishis are
15 rated as 2.4-megawatt generators, and we are
16 proposing adjusting that to 2.2 megawatts each.

17 I've touched on the collector lines
18 already, and then, lastly, I wanted to touch on kind
19 of a bonus for many folks living in the region that,
20 you know, might be annoyed with the constant
21 blinking lights at night, we will be installing
22 light mitigation. So it's known as ADLS, or
23 aircraft detection lighting system.

24 Essentially what that means is we'll have
25 a new radar installed. Again, details TBD, but

1 likely sited at the O&M yard, and that radar would
2 protect the aircraft when it enters or is adjacent
3 to the project area, and at that point it would
4 trigger the lights on the turbine to flash at night.
5 But if no aircraft is detected at the time, your
6 skies remain dark at night. So just with -- we have
7 relationships with many landowners in the area. We
8 know that's kind of a huge bonus to many of those
9 folks.

10 And then I'm not sure if there's much to
11 highlight in the lower right here on the table, just
12 because there is so much that's to be determined at
13 this point. I just wanted to highlight as much as
14 we can that -- the pre- and post-condition
15 comparison. So there are 62 turbines out there at
16 Elm Creek II today, and we would hope to retrofit,
17 you know, as many of those 62 as possible is our
18 goal.

19 Again, we talked about turbine height.
20 What's operating out there today are the Mitsubishi
21 2.4s, and the proposed solution is up in the air
22 right now, what would fit the parameters discussed
23 here.

24 I've highlighted the tip height changes,
25 and then, yeah, the nameplate capacity. As you can

1 see on the table there, really it's in the same
2 table. Really that just reflects, we would hope to
3 get as close to where we're at on that generating
4 capacity that we are today. But, again, that's
5 something that we're still working on.

6 Maybe before our next slide here, I just
7 wanted to touch on as well, working towards
8 supporting just ongoing maintenance of the site and
9 just operation of the site. Installing lifts for
10 our ops, our operations crew, is an important kind
11 of maintenance item for those folks. So that's
12 something that we would look at doing within those
13 existing towers at Elm Creek II as well.

14 Okay. Next slide.

15 All right. So, again, the caveat that is
16 subject to change is very much in place when we're
17 talking about schedules at Elm Creek II, but you
18 know, important to discuss it and highlight, maybe
19 if nothing else, what the soonest potential timeline
20 breakdown might look like. So that is very much
21 what this is. It's truly changing on a week-to-week
22 basis here, but it's what we're working towards.

23 So right away, environmental surveys,
24 obviously permitting work, that's, you know, why
25 we're here tonight, it's ongoing. The PUC

1 application -- Sam, as you highlighted -- was
2 submitted in April. Looking ahead then towards
3 engineering design, I know that's something, again,
4 that we're working on actively day to day. We would
5 anticipate potentially construction-ready design as
6 soon as the end of this year, December 2025.

7 And all working towards, you know, when
8 we think about an earliest possible construction
9 start, something like springtime of 2026, May of
10 2026. That would be our goal, and that would be
11 working towards an earliest possible COD -- again
12 that's the commercial operation date -- by year-end
13 of 2026.

14 And then, lastly, right, we don't --
15 after a project like this, you know, we're not going
16 anywhere. We would be back on site, right,
17 throughout the following year, 2027, for restoration
18 and reclamation purposes to leave the site as good,
19 or in better condition, as we found it.

20 So I think that's all I had. You can hit
21 next slide, but I believe that's just a map, which
22 was really more pertinent for the in-person
23 component. But yeah, thanks, Sam; thanks, Rich. I
24 appreciate the chance to highlight Elm Creek II.

25 MR. RICH DAVIS: All right. I will try

1 to keep it quick here. I'm Rich Davis. I'm with
2 the Public Utilities Commission now, in our Energy
3 Infrastructure Permitting Unit, environmental
4 review. And, kind of, our -- I mean, we used to be
5 with the Department of Commerce in EERA, as folks on
6 here know, and we're essentially carrying our same
7 tasks and jobs over as we move over to the
8 Commission.

9 So we provide technical assistance and
10 environmental review and analysis for the
11 Commissioners. We don't advocate for or against any
12 particular projects. We're just doing objective
13 analysis of the proposed project and potential
14 impacts to human and environmental resources. And
15 our goal is just to help the Commission make an
16 informed decision on the issuance of, in this case,
17 an amended site permit for the repowering.

18 Next slide.

19 This is just availability of project
20 information. The top one there is our webpage
21 specific for this project. There's also a submit
22 comment button at the top of that page, and that
23 second link there is for eDockets. You can get to
24 the eDockets full docket and full record also by
25 going through our project page. That's -- it might

1 save a little bit of headache or a little bit of
2 hassle.

3 Next slide.

4 This is a little bit on what we do with
5 the application that comes in. So Elm Creek II came
6 in with a request to amend their site permit. It
7 was an application for that, and that serves as the
8 primary environmental review document for wind
9 projects.

10 And in that application, it identifies
11 what is being proposed as far as activities for the
12 project and also what potential resource impacts
13 there could be, as well as identifying potential
14 mitigation measures that can be undertaken.

15 We use that to develop a draft site
16 permit, an amended draft site permit, which we
17 issued, as Sam mentioned, back in June of this year
18 when we were still at Commerce. And we'll take
19 this -- we take the opportunity here to get --
20 receive comments, and we take that to further
21 develop that amended draft site permit before it
22 will eventually go on to the Commissioners for their
23 final decision.

24 Next slide.

25 Public participation, you can obviously

1 provide comments tonight, submit comments in
2 writing. Or online, as I mentioned before, there's
3 a comment tab that will take you through the process
4 on our website. You can e-mail me. That's my
5 mailing address.

6 Stacy, I know that you pretty regularly
7 just eFile your own stuff, so I think we're pretty
8 well covered for that one.

9 Next slide.

10 Comment period deadline, Wednesday,
11 August 20th, 2025, 4:30 p.m.

12 Next slide.

13 Topics to address with comments that
14 are -- that assist us the most or are the most
15 helpful as we're trying to nail down the amended
16 draft site permit to take to the Commissioners, just
17 should the Commission issue an amended draft site
18 permit for the repowering project? If the site
19 permit amendments are authorized, what additional
20 conditions, if any, should the Commission impose for
21 this matter?

22 Next slide.

23 We don't have to worry about speakers
24 tonight, but just some general rules of thumb. One
25 speaker at a time. We don't got to worry about

1 maintaining respect because I know Sam can mute you
2 if you get a little bit out of control.

3 MR. SAM LOBBY: It doesn't look like we
4 have anybody, so I think we're good on that front
5 anyway.

6 MR. RICH DAVIS: All righty. And I don't
7 know if there's -- yeah, this is just general
8 information on the project. That's pretty much
9 everything that we've already covered.

10 MR. SAM LOBBY: Oh, Stacy said she might
11 have something to say.

12 MR. RICH DAVIS: I've experienced that
13 before. That's all right. All right.

14 MR. SAM LOBBY: Well, with that, I think
15 we've pretty much covered everything. I will plan
16 on getting the presentation in the record here
17 probably tomorrow so that folks who maybe weren't
18 able to attend are able to at least access it online
19 if they got the notice and they know how to do that.

20 So does anybody have any closing remarks,
21 or does that pretty much do it for us?

22 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: I think we're okay
23 here in Minneapolis.

24 MR. SAM LOBBY: I've got a hand raised
25 from Stacy. Stacy, I just unmuted you.

1 MS. STACY KOTCH EGSTAD: Can you hear me?

2 MR. SAM LOBBY: Yeah, we can hear you.

3 MS. STACY KOTCH EGSTAD: Awesome. Okay.

4 I just have a question for the group regarding --
5 and forgive me for my ignorance, so it's a two-part
6 question. The first part is, understanding that the
7 turbine placement remains the same, does the height
8 difference affect the statewide radio tower system?
9 And if so, have they reached out directly to MnDOT's
10 Statewide Radio Communications office?

11 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: I'm sorry, was that
12 Stacy?

13 MR. SAM LOBBY: Yes.

14 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: So, Stacy, we have
15 ran updated beam path studies analyzing the repower,
16 and that's not something that came up in particular.
17 So, you know, there was no conflict with -- I'm
18 sorry, I forget what you called it, with that
19 particular conflict.

20 MR. SAM LOBBY: It looks like you got
21 muted there, again, Stacy. Sorry about that.

22 MS. STACY KOTCH EGSTAD: Yeah. I think I
23 did it to myself. Thank you.

24 Yeah, the name was the Office of
25 Statewide Radio Communications. They have recently

1 reached out to me and wanted to be made aware of any
2 wind turbine projects or upgrades. So I was just
3 making sure that aside from the Capitol Airspace
4 Group work that you have in your application, that
5 that was taken into consideration.

6 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: I see, okay. Yeah.
7 We can take note of that and follow up either way,
8 yeah.

9 MS. STACY KOTCH EGSTAD: Okay. Thank
10 you.

11 MR. LUKE SCHWITZER: Yeah, thank you.

12 MR. SAM LOBBY: All righty. With that, I
13 think it sounds like you're good over there in
14 Minneapolis; I think we're good over here in
15 St. Paul; Rich, you're good down south. All righty,
16 I think we're good.

17 MR. RICH DAVIS: I am good.

18 MR. SAM LOBBY: Awesome. Hey, thanks,
19 everybody, for all the work. I really appreciate
20 the coordination with everybody on everything and
21 all your respective roles and the work you did to
22 make all this happen. So thanks, everybody, and
23 have a great night.

24 (Public comment concluded.)

25

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