

INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS

LOCAL NO. 49, 49A, 49B, 49C, 49D, 49E, 49L
MINNESOTA • NORTH DAKOTA • SOUTH DAKOTA

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February 11, 2022

Mr. Will Seuffert
Executive Secretary
Minnesota Public Utilities Commission
121 7th Place East, Suite 350
St. Paul, MN 55101

RE: In the Matter of the Application of Big Bend Wind, LLC for a Certificate of Need, Site Permit, and Route Permit for an up to 308 MW Wind Farm and Associated 161 kV Transmission Line in Cottonwood, Martin, and Watonwan Counties, Minnesota
PUC Docket Number: IP7013/CN-19-408, IP7013/WS-19- 619, IP7013/TL-19-621

Dear Mr. Seuffert,

On behalf of the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49 ("Local 49") I appreciate the ability to reaffirm our support for the Big Bend Wind Project.

Local 49 is a construction labor union which represents over 14,400 heavy equipment operating engineers, mechanics, and stationary engineers across Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota. Our members have extensive experience in construction and maintenance of energy infrastructure, including wind farms. Many of our members in southwestern Minnesota, 255 of whom live within 50 miles of this project, make their livings building large scale infrastructure projects like this one.

As Minnesota's energy sector increases its renewable energy holdings and retires many of its fossil fuel generation facilities, we must account for all this transition's effects, both intended and unintended. Construction workers at legacy energy facilities are largely unionized in our region, this means they are paid area standard wages that are family sustaining, provided family healthcare coverage, earn towards a secure retirement, and support training programs that create a supply network of highly skilled and safety-oriented tradesmen and tradeswomen who are ready and waiting to build and maintain

future energy sector projects. One way Minnesota can work toward a just and equitable energy transition lies in the renewable energy industry meeting these same employment standards, guaranteeing that Minnesota's energy transition does not come at the expense of the men and women that build and maintain it.

This project along with its counterpart Red Rock Solar project and the proposed Big Bend HVTL will further Minnesota's goals of increasing renewable energy output while minimizing the intermittency of that supply. We were happy to hear that Big Bend Wind, LLC has identified using local labor as one of its development priorities. We agree that this project should prioritize Minnesota workers for the construction of this project, as this would retain most of the project's benefits in the local economy.

It is our belief that utilizing local contractors and subcontractors that pay local standard wages ensures these goals and protects responsible local contractors from being undercut by low wage fly by night contractors. We have had good experiences working on projects with Apex Clean Energy in the past and look forward to the work this first of its kind project will create in the region.

We ask that the Commission grant a certificate of need and site permit for this wind and HVTL project and the associated solar project.

Thank you for your time and consideration.



Nathaniel J Runke
Regulatory & Political Affairs Coordinator
International Union of Operating Engineers, Local 49